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Assess Nomophobia Among Undergraduate Students In Selected Colleges Of Thrissur District

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Abstract: Nomophobia, or "no mobile phone phobia," is a psychological condition characterized by fear or anxiety when individuals are without access to a mobile phone. With smartphones becoming integral to daily life, especially among youth, nomophobia has emerged as a significant public health concern. **Aim**: The present study was undertaken to assess the prevalence of nomophobia and its association with selected sociodemographic variables among undergraduate students in Thrissur District, Kerala. **Materials and Methods:** A Quantitative approach, non-experimental descriptive research design was adopted, and data were collected from 160 undergraduate students using a structured online questionnaire distributed via social media. Descriptive and inferential statistics were analyzed using SPSS software. **Results:** Of the 160 participants, 156 (97.5%) exhibited some level of nomophobia, while only 4 (2.5%) showed no signs. Among those affected, 62 (38.75%) had mild nomophobia, 67 (41.88%) had moderate, and 27 (16.88%) had severe nomophobia. Significant associations were observed between nomophobia and monthly family income, family type, smartphone price, daily usage duration, data consumption, and purpose of smartphone use. **Conclusion:** The study demonstrates a high prevalence of nomophobia among undergraduate students and emphasizes the need for awareness initiatives and behavioural interventions to reduce smartphone dependency, promote mindful usage, and enhance mental health and digital well-being among young adults.

Keywords: Nomophobia, Smartphone Addiction, Undergraduate Students, Mental Health, Digital Dependence

Introduction

"Loneliness does not come from having no people around you, but from being unable to communicate the things that seem important to you."

Wireless communication has revolutionized the way individuals interact and connect with one another. The proliferation of mobile devices and the internet have given rise to a "mobile youth culture" where communication occurs instantly at the tap of a screen or the press of a button. Digital technologies, particularly smartphones, have significantly altered daily routines, enabling seamless connectivity, fostering collaboration, and expanding access to education. Among the younger generation, smartphones have become an integral part of life, influencing their social interactions and overall lifestyle [1,2].

The introduction of smartphones has dramatically changed human interaction, penetrating approximately 70% of the global population, with mobile phone subscriptions growing from 12.4 million to over 5.6 billion in the last 20 years [3]. While smartphones offer convenience, their excessive use has been linked to various public health concerns, affecting both mental and physical well-being across all age groups [4].

Among the negative consequences of excessive smartphone use, nomophobia ("no mobile phone phobia") has emerged as a notable psychological condition. Nomophobia is defined as the fear of being without a mobile phone, which can lead to heightened anxiety, stress, and behavioral dependence on digital devices [5]. Studies indicate that nomophobia is prevalent among contemporary youth, with reported prevalence rates ranging between 13% and 79% [6].

Given the rising prevalence of nomophobia and its potential impact on mental health, it is essential to explore its extent and contributing factors among undergraduate students. Understanding this issue is crucial for developing strategies to promote healthier smartphone usage and mitigate its adverse effects. By identifying key factors influencing nomophobia, this research seeks to provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals to encourage a balanced approach to technology use among students.

Review of literature

Greeshma George, George Vincent (2022-23) A cross-sectional study was conducted between December 2022 and February 2023 to assess the prevalence and determinants of nomophobia among medical students in Kerala. A sample of 294 students was selected using a convenient sampling method. Data were collected using the Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q) to measure nomophobia severity and the Insomnia Index Questionnaire to assess sleep disturbances. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with appropriate tests to examine associations between variables. The findings revealed a very high prevalence of nomophobia (99.6%) among the participants. However, no statistically significant associations were observed between nomophobia severity and sociodemographic factors such as gender, age, year of study, average screen time, or severity of insomnia. The study concluded that there is an

urgent need for interventions to address excessive mobile phone dependency among medical students.[6]

Anand S, Anoopa et al. (2020) A descriptive study was conducted to assess the prevalence of nomophobia among nursing students in four nursing colleges of Kollam, Kerala—Bishop Benziger College of Nursing, Upasana College of Nursing, VNSS College of Nursing, and Holy Cross College of Nursing. A sample of 643 students was selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using a demographic pro forma and a standardized 7-point self-reporting Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q). The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to determine prevalence and associations. The results showed that 2% of students had severe nomophobia, 33% moderate, 54% mild, and 11% no nomophobia, with an overall prevalence of 34.84%. A significant association was observed between nomophobia and level of study, duration of smartphone use, frequency of phone checking, and number of checking episodes at a 0.05 level of significance. The study concluded that nomophobia is prevalent among nursing students and strongly related to their smartphone usage patterns.[7]

Objectives

1. To assess the levels of nomophobia among undergraduate students in Thrissur District, Kerala.
2. To find out the association between the levels of nomophobia among undergraduate students and their selected socio-demographic variables.

Hypothesis

H_0: There is no significant association between the levels of nomophobia among Undergraduate students and their selected socio-demographic variables.

Materials and methods

Research Approach

This research method adopted for the present study was Quantitative approach.

Research Design

In the present study, non-experimental, descriptive research design was used.

Setting

The study was conducted in selected colleges of Thrissur District, Kerala.

Population

The study population consists of undergraduate students from selected colleges of Thrissur District, Kerala.

Sample and Sampling technique

Sample consists of 160 undergraduate students from selected colleges of Thrissur District, Kerala. The sampling technique used in the study was purposive sampling.

Development of tool

The tool used in the study had 2 sections: Sociodemographic Proforma and Nomophobia Questionnaire.

Section 1

Socio-demographic Proforma comprising of age, gender, course, monthly income of the family, type of family, the price range of smartphone used, duration of smartphone ownership, frequency of use of a smartphone, frequency of checking of the smartphone, the purpose of use of the smartphone, duration of use of smartphone per day, data usage per day.

Section 2

Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q) The NMP-Q is a 20-item scale developed by Yildirim and Correia (2015) through a thorough procedure including qualitative and quantitative phases. The NMP-Q comprises four factors (Factor 1: not being able to communicate; Factor 2: losing connectedness; Factor 3: not being able to access information; and Factor 4: giving up convenience). A 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) is applied to each NMP-Q item leading to a summated total score. The higher the score, the greater the severity of nomophobia. In addition, the interpretation of the NMPQ score into the level of nomophobia (out of a total score between 20 and 140) is 20 corresponding to the absence; 21–59 corresponding to a mild level; 60–99 corresponding to a moderate level; and ≥100 corresponding to severe level.

Procedure for data collection

The process of gathering information to address a research problem is called data collection. Data collection was conducted from 20 January 2025 to 18 march 2025 in various colleges of Thrissur district. Formal administrative approval was taken before the conduct of the study. Ethical clearance was obtained from both Department research committees followed by Institutional Ethical Committee. The data was collected from 160 undergraduate students by web-based questionnaire through Google Forms. Samples were given the necessary information and informed consent was taken. Confidentiality of the data was ensured. The purpose of the study was explained, and the selected subjects were required to mark the correct option in the structured questionnaire as well as in a seven-point Likert scale.

The procedure for data collection was found to be satisfactory. After completing the questionnaire, participants were thanked for their time and contributions to the study. The collected data were systematically tabulated and analyzed using statistical methods. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed for a comprehensive analysis.

Results

Table 1: Description of frequency of socio-demographic variable according to the level of nomophobia among undergraduate students N=160

Sociodemographic variable	Variable		No Nomo phobia	Mild Nomo phobia	Moderate Nomo phobia	Severe Nomo Phobia
Age(years)	17-19	24	1	8	11	4
	20-22	117	3	47	48	19
	23-25	19	0	7	8	4
Gender	Male	33	0	13	15	5
	Female	127	4	49	52	22
Monthly income of the family	Less than 50,000	86	1	35	40	10
	50,000-1 lakh	64	3	22	25	14
	More than 1 lakh	10	0	4	4	2
Type of family	Nuclear	147	2	55	65	25
	Joint	13	2	7	2	2
Price range of smartphone	Less than 10,000	45	3	13	24	5
	More than 10,000	115	1	48	44	22
Duration of smartphone ownership	Less than 5 years	118	4	49	48	17
	More than 5 years	42	0	14	18	10
Duration of smartphone use per day	Less than 3 hours	64	2	30	21	11
	3-6 hours	83	28	40	40	13
	More than 6 hours	13	0	5	6	2
Data use per day	Less than 2 GB	126	4	55	45	22
	More than 2 GB	34	0	8	20	6
Frequency of checking phone	Every 30 minutes or less	50	1	23	17	9
	Every hourly	74	1	27	33	13
	Every 2 hourly or more	26	1	13	17	5
Purpose of checking the phone	Gaming	6	0	4	2	0
	Looking information on internet	43	1	19	20	3
	Killing time	31	0	5	20	6
	Listening music	29	1	11	9	8
	Talk or text with family or friends	51	2	24	15	10

Table 2: Association of nomophobia with selected sociodemographic variable. N =160

Sociodemographic variable	Variable	No Nomo phobia	Mild Nomo phobia	Moderate Nomo phobia	Severe Nomo phobia	Chi Square Test	P Value	Association
Age(years)	17-19	1	8	11	4	1.341	0.246	NS
	20-22	3	47	48	19			
	23-25	0	7	8	4			
Gender	Male	0	13	15	5	1.244	0.264	NS
	Female	4	49	52	22			
Monthly income of the family	Less than 50,000	1	35	40	10	5.445	0.019	S
	50,000-1 lakh	3	22	25	14			
	More than 1 lakh	0	4	4	2			
Type of family	Nuclear	2	55	65	25	12.62	0.000	S
	Joint	2	7	2	2			
Price range of smartphone	Less than 10,000	1	13	24	5	8.711	0.005	S
	More than 10,000	1	48	44	22			
Duration of smartphone ownership	Less than 5 years	4	49	48	17	3.61	0.057	NS
	More than 5 years	0	40	8	10			
Duration of smartphone use per day	Less than 3 hours	2	30	21	11	27.42	0.000	S
	3-6 hours	2	28	40	13			
	More than 6 hours	0	5	6	2			
Data use per day	Less than 2 GB	4	55	45	22	7.352	0.006	S
	More than 2 GB	0	8	20	6			
Frequency of checking phone	Every 30 minutes or less	1	23	17	9	2.445	0.117	NS
	Every hourly	1	27	33	33			
	Every 2 hourly or more	1	13	17	17			
Purpose of checking the phone	Gaming	0	4	2	0	20.60	0.000	S
	Looking information on internet	1	19	20	3			
	Killing time	0	5	20	6			
	Listening music	1	11	9	8			
	Talk or text with family or friends	2	24	15	10			

*Table 2 revealed that there is a significant association between selected sociodemographic variables such as monthly income of the family, type of family, price range of smartphone, duration of smartphone use per day, data use per day and purpose of checking the phone with p value less than 0.05.

Discussion

Section 1: Findings related to sociodemographic proforma

The present study assessed the prevalence of nomophobia and its associated sociodemographic factors among undergraduate students. The majority of students (73.1%) belonged to the age group of 20-22 years, with a higher proportion of females (79.4%) than males (20.6%). These findings are in line with a study conducted by Yildirim et al., which also reported that younger individuals, particularly university students, are at a higher risk of nomophobia due to their dependence on smartphones for academic, social, and entertainment purposes. [5]

With regard to smartphone usage behavior, the majority (46.3%) of students checked their phones every hour, and 31.3% checked them every 30 minutes or less. These findings are consistent with a study conducted by Chethana et al. in Karnataka, where frequent phone checking behaviour was associated with increased nomophobia scores [9]. Additionally, the current study found that the most common purpose of smartphone use was for communication with family (31.9%), followed by internet browsing (26.9%), passing time (19.4%), listening to music (18.1%), and gaming (3.8%). These results are similar to a study by Harish et al., which found that students primarily use smartphones for social interaction and information seeking rather than gaming [4].

Overall, the present study's findings contribute to the growing evidence that nomophobia is a prevalent issue among undergraduate students, with significant associations between smartphone usage patterns and sociodemographic factors. Given the increasing dependence on smartphones for academic and personal use, further research and awareness programs are necessary to mitigate the potential negative effects of excessive smartphone usage on students' mental well-being and academic performance.

Section 2: Findings related to assessment of the level of nomophobia among undergraduate children

The present study found that 2.50% of participants exhibited no signs of nomophobia, while 38.75% experienced mild nomophobia, 41.88% had moderate nomophobia, and 16.88% suffered from severe nomophobia. These findings are consistent with prior research, suggesting that smartphone dependency is prevalent among students.

A study conducted in Turkey by Yildirim and Correia (2015) revealed that 42.6% of university students had moderate nomophobia, while 19.9% experienced severe nomophobia, which closely matches the results of the present study [5]. This similarity suggests that nomophobia is a widespread issue among students, regardless of geographical location.

In a study conducted among medical students in Karnataka, India, Chethana et al. (2020) found that 67.2% had moderate nomophobia, while 17.3% suffered from severe nomophobia [5]. The slightly higher percentage of moderate cases in their study may be attributed to medical students' academic stress and their reliance on smartphones for educational purposes.

Section 3: Findings related to the association between nomophobia and selected demographic variables

The present study revealed that variables such as age (χ^2=1.341), gender (χ^2=1.244), frequency of checking smartphones (χ^2=2.445), and smartphone ownership (χ^2=3.61) did not show a statistically significant association with levels of nomophobia. However, significant associations were found between nomophobia levels and variables such as monthly family income (χ^2=5.445), family type (χ^2=12.62), price range of smartphones (χ^2=8.711), duration of smartphone usage (χ^2=27.425), data use per day (χ^2=7.352), and purpose of smartphone use (χ^2=20.604). These findings suggest that economic and behavioural factors play a more significant role in smartphone dependency compared to demographic factors such as age and gender.

A study by Yildirim and Correia (2015) also reported no significant relationship between age and gender with nomophobia, supporting the findings of the present study [5]. This indicates that both males and females are equally susceptible to smartphone addiction. Similarly, a study conducted in Karnataka by Chethana et al. (2020) found that gender had no significant association with nomophobia, reinforcing that smartphone dependency is a universal phenomenon affecting individuals regardless of gender [8].

Conclusion

The study reveals a high prevalence of nomophobia among undergraduate students, with 41.88% experiencing moderate and 16.88% severe levels. Nomophobia was significantly associated with family income, family type, smartphone price, daily usage, data consumption, and purpose of use. No significant association was found with age, gender, smartphone ownership, or frequency of checking. These findings underscore the need for awareness programs to promote healthy smartphone habits and support students' mental well-being and academic performance.

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