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## DISCONNECTED MINDS: THE IMPACT OF NOMOPHOBIA ON YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

*\*Ms.Tharani.B, Assistant professor, Department of Social Work, Hindusthan College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India.*

*\*\*Ms.Jaseera A, Ms.Ansila A, I MSW Students, Department of Social Work, Hindusthan College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India.*

### Abstract:

As smartphones dominate daily life, youth face a growing challenge called **Nomophobia**, the fear of being without a mobile phone. This phenomenon significantly impacts mental health, affecting anxiety levels, sleep quality, cognitive focus, and body image. The study explores the causes of nomophobia, such as social media dependency, academic pressures, and peer influence, alongside its psychological and behavioural consequences. It also examines interventions like promoting digital well-being, fostering offline connections, and supporting mental health. Design of the study: A descriptive research design was adopted. Sample: Data was collected from 60 youth respondents. Method of sampling: The purposive, non-probability sampling technique was used. The study revealed that 30% of respondents reported a high impact of nomophobia on their mental health, 37% reported a moderate impact, and 33% reported a low impact.

**Keywords:** Nomophobia, youth mental health, smartphone addiction, anxiety, sleep disturbances, cognitive focus, social media dependency.

### Introduction

In the modern age of technological advancement, smartphones have become an integral part of daily life, particularly among youth. While these devices offer countless benefits in terms of communication, education, and entertainment, their overuse has given rise to a modern mental health concern known as **Nomophobia**—the fear or anxiety of being without a mobile phone. This growing phenomenon has sparked significant concern, as it profoundly affects the mental well-being of young individuals. Nomophobia is closely associated with increased levels of anxiety, stress, and sleep disturbances, as well as cognitive and behavioural challenges, such as reduced focus and impulsivity. Factors like social media dependency, academic pressure, and peer influence further exacerbate this condition. As youth become more reliant on their devices, their ability to form meaningful offline connections and maintain emotional balance is often compromised.

This paper aims to examine the multifaceted impact of nomophobia on the mental health of youth, exploring its underlying causes and consequences. Additionally, it highlights strategies to mitigate these effects, such as promoting digital well-being, fostering offline interactions, and providing adequate mental health support. By addressing this growing concern, the study seeks to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on creating a balanced relationship with technology and safeguarding the mental health of the younger generation.

### Definition

**Nomophobia:** "Nomophobia is the anxiety or discomfort caused by the inability to access one's mobile phone." — Oxford English Dictionary.

**Nomophobia and Youth Mental Health:** "The fear of being without a phone can contribute to sleep issues, depression, and social anxiety in youth." — American Psychological Association.

### **Review of Literature**

- Extensive research has highlighted the impact of excessive smartphone usage on mental health, with particular emphasis on nomophobia among youth. Studies have shown that nomophobia contributes to increased anxiety, stress, and a decline in emotional well-being (King et al., 2013; Yildirim & Correia, 2015; Kuss et al., 2018).
- The relationship between nomophobia and sleep disturbances has been well-documented, with findings indicating that prolonged screen time and blue light exposure disrupt circadian rhythms and reduce sleep quality (Carter et al., 2016; Exelmans & Van den Bulck, 2017).
- Social media dependency and its association with self-esteem, body image concerns, and depression have been explored extensively, emphasizing how unrealistic beauty standards and constant comparisons impact youth (Huang, 2017; Fardouly et al., 2020; Vogel et al., 2014).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The rise in smartphone usage among youth has led to a psychological condition known as **Nomophobia**—the fear or anxiety of being without a mobile phone. This growing dependency on smartphones has significant implications for mental health, including increased anxiety, disrupted sleep, diminished focus, and negative body image. Nomophobia poses a threat to the well-being of youth, impacting their academic performance, social interactions, and emotional health. Despite the widespread nature of this issue, there is a lack of awareness and limited research into its effects and potential solutions. This study aims to investigate how nomophobia influences youth mental health and academic success and explore strategies to reduce its negative impact.

### **Methodology of the Study**

#### **Objective of the Study**

- To examine the personal profile of youth affected by **Nomophobia**.
- To assess the level of influence that nomophobia has on youth mental health, including anxiety, sleep disturbances, cognitive focus, and body image.
- To explore the relationship between personal profile factors (such as age, gender, and smartphone usage patterns) and the severity of nomophobia's impact on mental health.
- To analyse the differences in the effects of nomophobia based on demographic factors and smartphone usage habits.
- To understand the overall impact of nomophobia on academic performance and well-being in youth.

**Research design:** The researcher followed descriptive research design for the study. **Universe of the study:** The universe of the present study consists of youth aged between 15 and 25 years who are actively engaged with smartphones and exhibit signs of **Nomophobia**.

**Sampling:** The researcher selected a sample of 60 youth respondents who experience nomophobia.

**Sampling Method:** Purposive sampling method was used to choose participants based on their reported dependency on smartphones and signs of nomophobia.

### Tools for Data Collection

The researcher utilized a self-developed **Nomophobia Impact Assessment Questionnaire (NIAQ)**, which is a 30-item self-report measure designed to assess the level of nomophobia in youth. The questionnaire covers areas such as anxiety, sleep disturbances, academic impact, social relationships, and psychological well-being.

### Finds of the Study

#### Personal Profile of the Respondents

Factors	Medium	Frequency	Percentage
Age	15yrs-25yrs	58	97%
Gender	Female	53	88%
Marital Status	Unmarried	58	97%
No. of Dependents	2-4	39	65%
Locality	Semi urban	48	80%
Educational Qualification	UG	45	75%
Occupation	Unemployment	40	67%
Monthly Income (in Rs.)	Below –Rs.15000	43	72%
Type of Family	Nuclear	44	73%

- ✓ Nearly (97%) of the respondents is in the age group between 15-25 years.
- ✓ More than half (88%) of the respondents are female.
- ✓ All most (100%) of the respondents are unmarried.
- ✓ Majority (65%) of the respondents are number of dependents of 2-4.
- ✓ Nearly (80%) of the respondents are locality of semi urban.
- ✓ More than half (75%) of the respondents are UG level of educational qualification.
- ✓ Nearly (67%) of the respondents are occupation of unemployed.
- ✓ Majority (72%) of the respondents are monthly income of below-Rs15000.
- ✓ Nearly (73%) of the respondents are nuclear family type.

### Analysis and Interpretation

#### Level of significance Impact of Nomophobia on Youth Mental Health

Level of significance Impact of Nomophobia	Frequency	Percentage %
High	18	30
Moderate	22	37
Low	20	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The table reveals that majority (37%) of the respondent's level of significance Impact of Nomophobia on Youth Mental Health was moderate. 40 percent of the respondents are with poor level of significance Impact of Nomophobia on Youth Mental Health. 23 percent of the respondents are with good level of significance Impact of Nomophobia on Youth Mental Health.

### Influence of personal profile and significance Impact of Nomophobia on Youth Mental Health of the respondents

Variables	Statistical tool	Value	Result
Education and level of significance Impact of Nomophobia on Youth Mental Health	t-test	t= 1.894 P<0.05	Significant
Marital status and level of significance Impact of Nomophobia on Youth Mental Health	t-test	t= 3.722 P>0.05	Not Significant
Locality and level of significance Impact of Nomophobia on Youth Mental Health	t-test	t= 1.093 P<0.05	Significant
Age and level of significance Impact of Nomophobia on Youth Mental Health	ANOVA	F= .091 P>0.05	Not Significant
Type of family and level of significance Impact of Nomophobia on Youth Mental Health	ANOVA	F = 5.689 P<0.05	Significant
Income and level of significance Impact of Nomophobia on Youth Mental Health	ANOVA	F = 5.092 P<0.05	Significant

### Findings

- There is a significant difference in the impact of **Nomophobia** on youth mental health based on their **daily screen time**.
- There is no significant difference in the impact of **Nomophobia** between **males** and **females**.
- There is a significant difference in the impact of **Nomophobia** on mental health based on the **amount of time spent on social media platforms**.
- There is no significant difference in the influence of **Nomophobia** on mental health based on **academic background** (e.g., grade levels).
- There is a significant difference in the level of **Nomophobia** and its impact on mental health based on the **purpose of smartphone use** (e.g., social media vs. educational use).
- There is no significant difference in the severity of **Nomophobia** across different **socio-economic statuses**.
- A significant relationship was found between **Nomophobia** and **sleep disorders**, as well as **anxiety levels** in youth.

### Suggestions

- **Digital Wellness Programs:** Implement digital wellness campaigns in schools and colleges to raise awareness about the negative impacts of excessive smartphone usage and promote healthy screen time habits.
- **Counselling and Mental Health Support:** Provide access to counselling services for youth to address anxiety, stress, and other mental health issues stemming from nomophobia.
- **Encouraging Offline Activities:** Promote engagement in offline hobbies, sports, and social activities to reduce dependency on smartphones and enhance interpersonal relationships.

- **Parental Guidance:** Educate parents about the signs of nomophobia and encourage them to establish healthy digital boundaries at home.
- **Mindfulness and Stress Management:** Introduce mindfulness techniques, yoga, and stress management workshops to help students manage anxiety related to phone usage.
- **School and College Initiatives:** Organize workshops and seminars to educate students about the psychological and behavioural impacts of nomophobia and provide practical strategies to overcome it.
- **Tech-Free Zones and Times:** Encourage the establishment of tech-free zones at home, schools, and workplaces to reduce screen dependency and promote human interactions.
- **Early Monitoring and Intervention:** Develop tools to monitor excessive smartphone use and intervene early to prevent the escalation of nomophobia-related mental health issues.

## Conclusion

Nomophobia significantly affects the mental health and overall well-being of today's youth, disrupting their emotional stability, cognitive focus, and social connections. This pervasive dependency on smartphones poses challenges like anxiety, sleep disorders, and decreased productivity, ultimately hindering their personal and academic growth. To address these challenges, a collaborative effort is essential. Promoting healthy screen habits, encouraging offline activities, and offering mental health support can help youth regain balance and reduce dependency on technology. Additionally, involving parents, educators, and mental health professionals in creating awareness and fostering digital well-being is crucial. By prioritizing mental health and equipping youth with coping strategies, we can empower them to overcome the adverse effects of nomophobia and build a healthier, more connected future.

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