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REVIEW ARTICLE

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NOMOPHOBIA AND SLEEP QUALITY: AN EMERGING PROBLEM AMONG YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

The uses of new technologies have become an integral part of our daily lives. We are observing unprecedented developments in terms of technology which are converging and making our life easier and more efficient. The mobile phone (MP) industry has come a long way in progress and creativity. This has incorporated the use of mobile phones in all aspects of daily living and at almost all levels of human activities, including entertainment, business, acquisition of knowledge, and social networking. Young people in particular appeared to be susceptible to high smartphone users. Along with the advantages that it provides from ready availability to convenient access to the internet, and a sense of comfort and connection to others. Although, smartphones offer enormous advantages to humankind, however we cannot ignore that this development can also bring about dependency and a negative impact particularly to the young generation. One such condition is known as "nomophobia" or "no-mobile phone phobia, which is the fear of being separated from one's mobile phone. The penetration of smartphones into human life finds expression in problematic smartphone use where one is unable to manage their usage and further increases screen time which directly causes problem with their sleeping pattern. The present paper explores the emerging of new technology and the concept of Nomophobia, and the impact on sleeping pattern.

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INTRODUCTION

The term Nomophobia was coined by the United Kingdom (UK) Post Office in 2008 during a study that commissioned YouGov, a research organization based. Nomophobia includes two phrases: "no mobile" and "phobia". Gonçalves, Dias and Correia, 2020 defined "Nomophobia" as follows:

"Nomophobia has been defined as the fear of not being able to use a smartphone and/or the services it offers. It refers to the fear of not being able to communicate and access information, losing the connectedness that smartphones allow, and giving up the convenience that smartphones provide."

Nomophobia is thought to be a modern age disorder that causes negative health risks and harmful psychological effects (King, Valença & Nardi, 2010; Daei, Ashrafi-rizi & Soleymani, 2019). Dixit along with colleagues in 2010 stated that Nomophobia is derived from "no mobile phone" and "phobia" – is a pathological fear of being out of contact with a mobile phone, having no mobile network, or having insufficient balance or battery. Researchers also found out that people with nomophobia utilised their devices as a shield to protect themselves from social interactions as they find themselves more comfortable, safe when using electronic connections compared to interacting with the physical world (Bragazzi & Del Puente, 2014).

Excessive use of the smartphone may lead to Nomophobia, which comes from an abbreviation of the expression no-mobile (King, Valença, & Nardi, 2010). Nomophobia can manifest as excessive use of a smartphone instead of direct human connections, acquiring more than one device, continuously carrying a mobile charger, and feeling anxious when unable to use the phone due to its unavailability, lack of network coverage, technical problems, or insufficient credit. Individuals may also excessively check for messages or missed calls, and avoid places where mobile phone use is prohibited or coverage is limited (Bragazzi & Del Puente, 2014).

Emergence of new Technology: Smartphones with their latest advancement in terms of the operating system, internet access and availability of information have become essential rather than accessories. Due to their capacity to perform various tasks, it has made life easier and more practical. Abu-Shanab and Haddad (2015) stated that the advantages of technological developments in this modern time have overshadowed its downsides in the minds of young people, where many of them didn't realize the negative side of using smartphones on behaviour and health. The problems emerge when young people become dependent on using their smartphone and part of their lives is presently lived virtually. The use of smartphone has increased exponentially among the population mainly among adolescents and young adults. These devices are always developing to become more appealing, compelling, and quicker, and mobile firms are vying to give us new models with more memory, better cameras, and batteries, while the number of applications and services available

is also growing, making us more reliant on them. In terms of social connectivity smartphones and their application has largely played an important role in social connections and sharing of information across the globe.

Nomophobia and youth: The definition of Youth varies and there is no universally accepted definition of youth. There are several definitions that exist with reference to youth. As stated by C. Devendiran, 2008, the concept of youth has different meaning at different time, the National Youth Policy (2021) in India defined the age group ranging from 15 to 29 years as youth. Today's youth are known for being the first generation where technology has taken a central part in their daily life, and they grow up with smartphones and social media, which greatly influences their communication and socialization. The youth population is especially attracted and influenced by the internet, as they get quick answers, instant rewards and have a very effective interactive mode capable of overcoming the barriers of space and time. Through the Internet young people have found an ideal means of communication, relationship and satisfaction of curiosity. So much so, that they use social networks to build their social identity, as well as a relational bond, tending to stay connected for long periods. Smartphones use has found an adverse impact on the psychosocial wellbeing of students particularly the youth. The impact ranges from complication in their physical health to social and psychological wellbeing, studies also found out that use of smartphones has an impact on the academic performance of youth (Maurya *et al.*, 2014; Qutishat *et al.*, 2020). College students are more proficient in using smartphones compared to other subpopulations. They are said to be the largest consumer group as they spend considerable time using their devices, depending on them for the simplest daily tasks. Students excessively use smartphones for watching the news, social connection, academic tasks, games, shopping, and information searching. Search engines (such as Google) and social media are the most common applications used for information, social connection, academic work, and entertainment (Kuss, Griffiths, & Binder, 2013; Al-Hariri & Al-Hattami, 2017; Alosaimi *et al.*, 2016). The dependency on their smartphones, has worsens their feelings of anxiety caused by being out of smartphone contact. Nomophobia is considered a disturbance of the digital, virtual and contemporary society, referring to the discomfort, the negative psychological dependency on smartphones. A term used to describe a growing fear in today's world. Nomophobia, a portmanteau for "no mobile phone phobia", refers to the discomfort or anxiety caused to a person by the non-availability of a phone. Nomophobia arises from a feeling of not being able to make and receive phone calls, send or receive text messages, losing internet connectivity and access to social networking sites and being able to access information online. This phobia has emerged as computers and cellular phones become more technologically developed and versatile in applications and communications. Excessive mobile phone use and dependence might lead to social withdrawal, anxiety, impaired sleep patterns, and poor academic performance (Notara *et al.*, 2021).

Nomophobia and its impact on sleep quality: Nomophobia is said to be a common problem among youth worldwide and manifests itself in the excessive usage of their phones, while studying, driving, and social gatherings, and even sleeping (Harwood, Dooley, Scott, Joiner, 2014). Excessive use of the smartphone can interfere with various aspects of daily life, and this excessive use triggers a series of behaviors that may be inappropriate for the users and the people close to them. However, the issue is not with the use of the device in itself, but with the time people spend on it. The problems emerge when people become dependent on using their smartphone and part of their lives are presently lived virtual (Gezgin, 2017). Young people who engage in frequent smartphone use during nighttime, may start having sleep disturbance and thereby adversely affect their mental health. Each individual has a different amount of sleep. Some individuals put aside sleep time by doing various things or for various reasons. There are short-term consequences of poorer sleep such as quality of life, emotional distress, mental health problems, and behavioral problems in individuals. Poorer sleep can also cause psychological and physical disorders such as loss of energy, mood swings, and the

inability to concentrate on studies. The impact of poorer sleep has an effect on psychosocial health, school and college performance, and the most severe impact is the use of nicotine and marijuana. Bedtime Smartphone use leads to a growing public health concern and an urgent need to understand its impacts on personal wellbeing and individual performance. Excessive use of smartphones before sleep is capable of triggering insomnia, delaying bedtime, increasing sleep latency and decreasing sleep duration. In a study conducted by Diengdoh and Devendiran (2024) internet addiction contributes significantly to the prediction of sleep quality among adolescents. Further, nomophobia contributes to the development of psychological unease, including anxiety, stress, depression, loneliness. The used of social media and nomophobia not only have an impact on sleep quality, but it can also have an impact on the mental health of young people and even adults. In a study conducted by Massar, Ali and Banerjee (2020) among youth, suggests that Facebook addiction is highly associated with mental health issues. It is a well-known fact that good sleep quality plays an important role in good physical health. On the other hand, lack of sleep is related to unfavourable health consequences which include high blood pressure, heart disease and others. On the other hand, lack of sleep is related to unfavourable health consequences which include high blood pressure, heart disease and others. The relationship between sleep and mental health is complex, A prolonged sleep disruptions are likely to interfere with mental health, many factors can affect sleep quality but the role of mobile use in causing sleep problems in young adults has gained huge attention in the past few years (Owen, 2014). Poor sleep quality over a long duration can caused perceived stress, depression and anxiety. It can also hamper the activities of daily functions and the energy to engage in productive work, which can disrupt the overall quality of life and feeling isolated from social life.

CONCLUSION

The use of technology and particularly smartphones has grown significantly in recent years, its rapid development has played a major role in connecting young adults through various mediums. The activities used range from entertainment, news, gathering information to overall fulfilling their social needs. With the growing rate in the number of people who are dependent on the advancement of technological devices such as smartphones, and using it excessively has heightened the prevalence of nomophobia. In hindsight, excessive use of mobile phones has an impact on physical health, psychological wellbeing and it can lead to sleep deprivation and disruption of sleep quality. It is therefore important to advocate the young generation about nomophobia and its usage, and the negative impact that it can have on their mental health and sleep quality. There is an urgent need for preventive measures and intervention plans that can help limit screen time of young adults and encourage them to seek help and guidance from mental health professionals.

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