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A BREVILOQUENT REVIEW ARTICLE ON “NOMOPHOBIA”

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ABSTRACT

The use of mobile phones has increased substantially since 2005, especially in European and Asian countries. Nomophobia is usually considered a behavioural addiction. It has been considered a symptom or syndrome of problematic digital media use in mental health, the definitions of which are not standardized for technical and genetical reasons. It shares many characteristics with drug addiction. The connection of mobile phones to the Internet is one of the causes of nomophobia. The symptoms of addiction may be the result of a need for comfort due to factors such as increased anxiety, poor self-esteem, insecure attachment, or emotional instability. Some people overuse mobile phones to gain comfort in emotional relationships. It is also highly possible that homophobic symptoms may be caused by other underlying and pre-existing mental disorders, with likely candidates including social phobia or social anxiety disorder, social anxiety, and panic disorder. People can use mobile phones to connect with friends and family, to obtain interpersonal needs such as family affection and tolerance. Mobile phones can also allow users to get support and accompany on the Internet. People indeed use mobile phones to regulate emotions, and as a powerful tool for cyber-psychology, mobile phones are connected to people's emotional life. Compared to other people, their sleep time will be shorter, the longer they use the phone, the more severe their depression. The increase in mobile phone usage is related to the decline in self-esteem and coping ability.

KEY WORDS: *Nomophobia & anxiety, poor self-esteem.*

INTRODUCTION:

The use of mobile phones has increased substantially since 2005, especially in European and Asian countries. Nomophobia is usually considered a behavioural addiction. Nomophobia (short for "no mobile phobia") is a word for the fear of, or anxiety caused by, not having a working mobile phone.¹ It has been considered a symptom or

syndrome of problematic digital media use in mental health, the definitions of which are not standardized for technical and genetical reasons.²

It shares many characteristics with drug addiction. The connection of mobile phones to the Internet is one of the causes of nomophobia. The symptoms of addiction may be the result of a need for comfort due to factors such as increased anxiety, poor self-esteem, insecure attachment, or emotional instability. Some people overuse mobile phones to gain comfort in emotional relationships.³

These could include low self-esteem (when individuals looking for reassurance use the mobile phone in inappropriate ways) and extroverted personality (when naturally social individuals use the mobile phone to excess).⁴ It is also highly possible that homophobic symptoms may be caused by other underlying and pre-existing mental disorders, with likely candidates including social phobia or social anxiety disorder, social anxiety, and panic disorder.⁵

According to Bianchi and Philips (2005) psychological factors are involved in the overuse of a mobile phone.⁶ These could include low self-esteem (when individuals looking for reassurance use the mobile phone in inappropriate ways) and extroverted personality (when naturally social individuals use the mobile phone to excess). It is also highly possible that nomophobic symptoms may be caused by other underlying and preexisting mental disorders, with likely candidates including social phobia or social anxiety disorder, social anxiety,⁷ and panic disorder.⁸

Among students, frequent cell phone usage has been correlated with decreases in grade point average (GPA) and increased anxiety that negatively impacts self-reported life satisfaction (well-being and happiness) in comparison to students with less frequent usage. GPA decreases may be due to the over-use of cell phone or computer usage consuming time and focus during studying, attending class, working on assignments, and the distraction of cell phones during class. Over-usage of cell phones may increase anxiety due to the pressure to be continually connected to social networks and could rob chances of perceived solitude, relieving daily stress, that has been linked as a component of well-being.⁹ People can use mobile phones to connect with friends and family, to obtain interpersonal needs such as family affection and tolerance. Mobile phones can also allow users to get support and accompany on the Internet. People indeed use mobile phones to regulate emotions, and as a powerful tool for cyber-psychology, mobile phones are connected to people's emotional life.¹⁰

CAUSES:

Researchers proposed that possible causes or predictors included:

- ❖ obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviour related to a smartphone
- ❖ interpersonal sensitivity, which is the ability to assess the abilities and traits from nonverbal cues in others, and may include:
 - feelings of personal inferiority
 - social discomfort
- ❖ the number of hours of smartphone use each day.¹¹

SYMPTOMS AND SIGNS:

Nomophobia occurs in situations when an individual experiences anxiety due to the fear of not having access to a mobile phone. The "over-connection syndrome" occurs when mobile phone use reduces the number of face-to-face interactions thereby interfering significantly with an individual's social and family interactions. The term "techno-stress" is another way to describe an individual who avoids face-to-face interactions by engaging in isolation including psychological mood disorders such as depression.⁷

Some clinical characteristics of nomophobia include using the device impulsively, as a protection from social communication, or as a transitional object. Observed behaviors include having one or more devices with access to internet, always carrying a charger, and experiencing feelings of anxiety when thinking about losing the mobile. People usually reduce sleep when they overuse their mobile phones. Lack of sleep can lead to depression and lack of care, which makes people willing to indulge in mobile phones. Research shows that the dependence on mobile phones is due to adverse mental health. Compared to other people, their sleep time will be shorter, the longer they use the phone, the more severe their depression. The increase in mobile phone usage is related to the decline in self-esteem and coping ability.¹²

Other clinical characteristics of nomophobia are a considerably decreased number of face-to-face interactions with humans, replaced by a growing preference for communication through technological interfaces, keeping the device in reach when sleeping and never turned off, and looking at the phone screen frequently to avoid missing any message, phone call, or notification (also called ringxiety). Nomophobia can also lead to an increase of debt due to the excessive use of data and the different devices the person can have. Nomophobia may also lead to physical issues such as sore elbows, hands, and necks due to repetitive use.¹³

TREATMENTS:

A standard treatment approach for phobias includes a variety of potential behavioural therapies. These therapies help to address the underlying fears and beliefs surrounding the phobia.

In the case of nomophobia, the therapies could help address a person's fear of losing their phone, not being connected, and the implications of not having access to their phone.

Some therapies for phobias include:

- **Cognitive behavioural therapy:** In this therapy, a person confronts the underlying thoughts that contribute to the phobia.
- **Desensitization, or exposure therapy:** This approach involves gradually exposing a person to the thing they fear. In nomophobia, a doctor may expose a person to a lack of access to their phone.
- **Hypnotherapy:** Hypnotherapy involves a therapist guiding a person through imagery to help them develop self-soothing techniques when confronted with not having access to a phone.

MEDICATIONS:

A healthcare professional may prescribe medications such as clonazepam and tranylcypromine to help treat Trusted Source the symptoms of nomophobia, such as anxiety. Mind, a British mental health charity, notes that the following medications can help treat phobias:

- beta-blockers
- tranquilizers
- antidepressants

SELF-CARE AND PRACTICE:

A person can practice self-care strategies on their own. They can take the following steps to manage their phobia:

- learn more about what causes their phobia
- progressive muscle relaxation, which involves focusing on relaxing muscles in groups
- practicing different therapeutic breathing techniques.¹¹

CONCLUSION:

Nomophobia refers to a group of symptoms in which a person experiences fear or anxiety regarding the loss of their smartphone or connectivity. It is not officially recognized, but more researchers are petitioning for its inclusion as a type of psychological disorder. Treatments are currently nonstandard and involve the use of medications, behavioural therapies, support groups, and self-care.

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