

Prevalence, Awareness and Effects Of Nomophobia among Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Addiction is considered by WHO (WHO Expert Committee 1964) as dependence, as the continuous use of something for the sake of relief, comfort, or stimulation, which often causes cravings when it is absent.

AIM: To study the prevalence, awareness and effects of nomophobia among adolescents

Materials and Method: Total 205 adolescents from 2 random schools were included in the study using non probability convenient sampling. They were administered a standardized tool to screen for nomophobia. Adolescents with nomophobia were administered standardized checklist to identify the effects of nomophobia. Semi structured checklist was used to assess the awareness about nomophobia and its ill effects.

Results In this study 54 (26%) adolescents were Nomophobic and 130 (64%) were at risk of developing Nomophobia. Adolescents with nomophobia (26%) perceived they were uncomfortable (16%), anxious (16%), worried (12%), annoyed (15%), scared (15%), awkward (11%) and nervous (15%). Out of 205, 58 of them were aware about the term nomophobia and 139 of them thought about the ill effects. 70 of them were unaware about ill effects of nomophobia, whereas 115 of them were partially aware.

Conclusion: The result of the study is indicative of increasing prevalence of Nomophobia among younger generation. Further research is required to investigate more in depth the psychological aspects and solutions for nomophobia.

Keywords: Mobile Phones, Nomophobia, Adolescents

INTRODUCTION

The mobile phone has many attributes and characteristics that make it very attractive to both young and old¹. In the recent times the concept of behavioural addiction has gained attention of researchers and it has been shown to be equivalent to substance dependence as understood by the current nosological systems² Behavioural addiction for mobile phones has been variously termed as Mobile phone Dependence, Mobile Phone Problematic Use, Problem cell phone use, Mobile phone abuse and Nomophobia (a portmanteau for “no mobile phone” and phobia)³⁻⁶ NoMoPhobias term coined by UK Post Office who has commissioned YouGov, a UK-based research

organization to study the level of anxieties suffered by mobile phone users. NoMoPhobia is an abbreviation for “no-mobile-phone phobia”⁷

Recent studies from India conducted in adults have identified mobile phone behavioural addiction as ranging from 33.5% to 39.6% using International Classification of Disease, 10th edition (ICD10) Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders criteria for dependence syndrome^{2,8} Mobile phone addiction appears to be a new disorder that merits inclusion in new classification systems of ICD-XI and DSM-V. It fulfills excessive use along with loss of sense of or neglect of basic drives. Withdrawal includes feelings of anger, tension and depression when phone

network is not available or battery got over, along with arguments, social isolation and fatigue.⁹

Chóliz M. (2012), author conducted a study to Test the Mobile Phone Dependence (TMD) on 2486 students aging between 12-18 years of age. The study revealed that mobile phone addiction has some problems, such as tolerance, withdrawals, craving, difficulty to control the impulse, escape from other problems, or negative consequences upon daily life (at familiar, academic, professional or social levels).¹¹ "There is an increase in the nomophobic population in India because the number of mobile phone users has increased," said Dr. Sanjay Dixit, one of the researchers and the head of the Indian Journal of Community Medicine. "We are currently doing another research on mobile phone dependency, it's not published yet, but analysis shows that about 45% of the Indian population, not just medical students, is nomophobic."¹⁰

Adolescence is an age of opportunity. Adolescents are at the crossroads between childhood and adulthood. The adolescents in India are mesmerized with technological advancement such as mobile phone, that they are not aware about the fact that they are totally dependent on it and are actually getting addicted. The above studies show that there is an increasing rate of nomophobia among adolescents and the adolescents are suffering through its various side effects. The researcher has identified that there is dearth of studies related to nomophobia in Indian context. Therefore the researcher determined to study the prevalence, effects and awareness of nomophobia among adolescents.

MATERIAL & METHOD

The present study was a survey study. Total 205 adolescents (8th, 9th & 10th std) from 2 random schools in suburban area of Mumbai were included in the study using non probability convenient sampling. Informed consent was taken. Demographic data was collected which included Gender, Age, duration of mobile phone usage, places and time of mobile phone use. The samples were administered a standardized tool to screen for nomophobia. Samples with score between 29-40 were considered nomophobic, score between 16-28 were considered at risk for developing nomophobia and score 10-15 showed no signs of nomophobia. Adolescents with nomophobia (score 29-40) were administered modified Nomophobia questionnaire (NMP - Q) to identify nomophobia related behavioural and emotional impairment. Semi

structured checklist was used to assess the awareness about nomophobia and its ill effects.

FINDINGS

Among 205 adolescents the prevalence rate found was 54 (26%) Nomophobic and 130 (64%) at risk of developing Nomophobia. 88% of adolescents had their own mobile and out of 205 adolescents 79 of them used mobile phone for more than 4hrs. Among 205 adolescents the places of mobile phone usage were, 101 while lying on bed, 97 while travelling, 82 while having meals, 57 while walking, 52 at tuition, 27 at place of worship, 26 in class and 22 in bathroom.

Adolescents with nomophobia (26%) perceived they were uncomfortable (16%), anxious (16%), worried (12%), annoyed (15%), scared (15%), awkward (11%) and nervous (15%). Out of 205, 58 of them were aware about the term nomophobia and 139 of them were aware about the ill effects, 70 of them were unaware about ill effects of nomophobia, whereas 115 of them were partially aware.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

A study conducted in Bangalore had a similar prevalence rate where 79 (39.5%) students with score >24 fell into category of nomophobia and another 27% were at risk of developing Nomophobia with a score of 20 -24.¹¹

In a study conducted in pune where Out of 560 respondents, 82% of the respondents agreed to irritability in their behaviour, 61% of respondents said to become anxious quite often, 78% reported to lack of sleep (due to gaming mainly), aggression was reported by 65% of respondents while stressful conditions, loneliness & loss of interest in studies were reported by 54%, 31% & 63% respectively.¹² supports the present study findings in aspect of nomophobia related behavioural and emotional impairment.

Awareness of nomophobia and its ill effects in the present study is supported by a descriptive study done, to evaluate the threat of mobile phones and addiction, conducted among 160 students from Belarus University. The data was collected using questionnaire which also included the test of mobile phone addiction. The results revealed that only 28.8% had knowledge about nomophobia and 1/10th (10.4%) of the students had the symptoms of addiction. Majority (68.11%) of students belonged to the age group of 18-20 years; and

almost 1/3rd (68.11%) of them had two mobile phones. Nearly half (43.16%) of the sample had knowledge about mobile phone addiction and only 28.8% were familiar with the term nomophobia. Hence, it was concluded that, majority of youngsters are being addicted to mobile phones and were unaware of nomophobia. There is a need to sensitize and educate about this dreaded disorder.¹³

The demographic findings of the present study is similar to a study of awareness of development of nomophobia condition in smart phone user management students in pune, in which less than 7% of respondents mentioned that, in a day approximately 2-3 hours are spent on mobile, while the large crunch of respondents (93%) found to spend more than 3 hours in day on smart phones, in that 79% of respondents are found to spend more than 5-6 hours on smart phones.¹²

Conflict of Interest: None

Ethical Clearance: Taken from Institutional ethical review board (IERB)

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