

Social Networking Usage, Nomophobia and Depression Symptoms among Young Adults

Savithri Bhattathirippad¹, Navya M Patel^{2*}

ABSTRACT

Social networking usage and its impact on various mental health conditions has been studied extensively among various age groups. However, the magnitude of its influence on nomophobia and depression symptoms especially in the age group of young adults is still elusive. In this research, the researcher has conducted a correlational study to investigate the relationship between social networking usage, nomophobia and depression symptoms among young adults. The study was conducted using Social Networking Usage Questionnaire, Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q) and Beck's Depression Inventory (BDI). A total 200 participants including 100 males and 100 females within the age group of 18 to 25 years were selected from the city of Bangalore, India based on convenience and snow ball sampling technique. The results from the study indicated a strong positive correlation between social networking usage and nomophobia. There existed a significant correlation between nomophobia and depression symptoms. There was no significant correlation between social networking usage and depression symptoms. Independent sample t-test was administered to investigate the difference among males and females on the variables of the study. There was no difference among males and females with respect to social networking usage, nomophobia and depression symptoms. Further implications of the study are discussed in detail.

Keywords: *Social Networking Usage, Nomophobia, Depression symptoms, young adults*

Human beings are social beings with social needs. Social interactions and relationships are pivotal components for an individual's psychological wellbeing. Having effective and healthy social interactions can help one in creating a life with resilience and ease the distress associated with stress, anxiety, depression and various other life challenges. A healthy psychosocial life is equated to a healthy emotional self. In the current world, human to human interaction is substituted by the presence of the advanced social networking sites including Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat etc. The concept of increased social networking usage as well as mobile phone usage is a point of concern for a larger section of the society. On one hand there are numerous benefits to this new way of communication while there are various challenges that is associated with the change in the communication style across the humanity and it has raised relevant questions on the profound

¹MSc Psychology, Department of Psychology, Kristu Jayanti College (Autonomous), Bangalore, India

²Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Kristu Jayanti College (Autonomous), Bangalore, India

*Corresponding Author

Received: July 20, 2021; Revision Received: October 26, 2021; Accepted: November 14, 2021

impact on the psychological wellbeing due to the new outlook on communication. The aim of this research is to study the relationship between social networking usage, Nomophobia and depression symptoms among young adults.

Social Networking Usage

According to Leung (2002) "Social networking usage refers to online space that is used by people to connect, share, communicate, establish or maintain connection with others for academic, entertainment, socialization etc". The number of people who are using social networking platforms on a global scale have increased drastically over the past decade. The use of social networking sites is for various purposes including sharing of personal information through the personal profiles on various social networking platforms, exchange of news and information, creation of content, building online relationships, entertainment purpose, educative and job-related purpose so on and so forth. Boyd and Ellison (2007) distinguished social networking sites (SNS) on three features, (1) 'a user-constructed public or semi-public profile', (2) 'a set of connections to other users within the system,' and (3) 'the ability to view one's own list of connections, as well as connections made by others in the system'. These platforms play crucial role in building networks among people across the globe. They also help in providing innumerable opportunities and perspectives for its users. There are numerous concerns related with suboptimal usage of these platforms and studies have raised questions on the impact of uncontrollable usage of these platforms as a leading cause for various mental health problems including anxiety, depression, loneliness, fear of missing out etc. The major Social Networking platforms includes Facebook, Whats App, Twitter, Instagram, Snap chat, LinkedIn, Myspace etc. Latest statistics shows that 57% of the world population is using internet on a daily basis and an estimate of 2.65 billion people are using social networking platforms as of 2018. This number is estimated to increase to 3.09 billion by 2021. Prensky (2001), introduced the term "digital natives" to indicate the young people within the age group of 14 to 25 years who are major users of social networking sites.

Nomophobia

Nomophobia is defined as "the fear of being out of mobile phone contact" (SecurEnvoy, 2012). "The term, nomophobia, is an abbreviation for no-mobile-phone phobia and it was first coined during a study conducted in 2008 by the UK Post Office to investigate anxieties mobile phone users suffer" (Secur Envoy, 2012). Yildirim, C., Correia, A. (2015) has introduced four dimensions of Nomophobia including (1) 'fear or nervousness for not being able to communicate with other people', (2) 'fear of not being able to connect'; (3) 'fear of not being able to have immediate access to information', and (4) 'fear of the renunciation of the comfort provided by mobile devices'. Even though Nomophobia is not specifically explained in the 5th Edition of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), it is categorized under the definition for DSM 4's "Specific Phobia". The concept of Nomophobia which is considered to be a modern age phobia is currently studied exclusively under the impact of mobile phone addiction / suboptimal social networking and its effect on mental health. An individual with Nomophobia (also called a Nomophobe) shows the following symptoms including dependence to the technology (mobile phone), anxiety, agitation, respiratory alterations, Tachycardia, trembling, disorientation, perspiration, depression, mood disturbances. There are other psycho-social symptoms that can be present in an individual with this condition including lower occupational productivity, problems associated with impulse control, inability to maintain face to face interactions, increased self-absorption, and impact on cognitive abilities including memory and learning and information over load.

Depression

According to American Psychological Association (APA) “Depression is more than just sadness. People with depression may experience a lack of interest and pleasure in daily activities, significant weight loss or gain, insomnia or excessive sleeping, lack of energy, inability to concentrate, feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt and recurrent thoughts of death or suicide”. Depression has an onset in early adulthood in most scenarios and can continue through various stages of life in not treated effectively. Depression affects an individual’s mood, appetite, sleep cycle and interest in carrying out day to day activities. Depression can impact an individual in various depth including impairment in their social life, occupational life, and family life. Depression is a curable condition with professional support including Pharmacological and psychotherapeutic interventions. If depression is not treated professionally, it can lead to various life-threatening conditions including suicide. There are various causes for depression including biological causes as well as environmental causes due. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) Depression is a common mental disorder affecting more than 264 million people globally.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Review of literature related to the current study gives researchers an in-depth knowledge about the variables and various other relevant studies based on the concept. There are separate studies on social networking usage, Nomophobia and depression symptoms on the selected population of young adults. However, studies relating these chosen variables have not been conducted before and are therefore limited. Thus, the following literature reviews that are discussed here helps in giving better understanding of the concepts adopted for the present study.

Ayar, Dijle PhD, RN, Özalp Gerçeker et.al. (December, 2018) published research titled “The Effect of Problematic Internet Use, Social Appearance Anxiety, and Social Media Use on Nursing Students' Nomophobia Levels”. The study was conducted on 755 nursing students. The findings from the study indicated that Nomophobia incorporates a sturdy positive impact on problematic internet usage, social appearance anxiety as well as the social media usage of the individuals. The study conjointly explained a positive correlation between Nomophobia with Social appearance anxiety, social media usage as well as problematic internet usage.

Azra Daeil, Hasan Ashrafi-rizi, Mohammad Reza Soleymani (November 2019) published a study titled “Nomophobia and health hazards: Smartphone use and addiction among university students” in Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Iran. The objective of the cross-sectional study was to understand the relationship between Nomophobia and smartphone usage among university students. The results from the study concluded a positive correlation between Nomophobia and the frequency of smartphone usage of the people. The study also indicated a moderate incidence rate of Nomophobia in the selected population.

Mehmet Kara, Kemal Baytemir & Fatma Iceman-Kara (October 2019) published research titled “Duration of daily smartphone usage as an antecedent of nomophobia: exploring multiple mediation of loneliness and anxiety”. The objectives of the study focused on the relationship between daily smartphone usage and Nomophobia of adolescents based on the social cognitive theory. The results of the study concluded a significant correlation between the duration of daily smartphone usage, loneliness, anxiety, and nomophobia among the adolescents. That means as the adolescent’s smart phone usage increases there is an increased tendency for loneliness, anxiety and Nomophobia related behaviour.

Nusrat Bano, Anwat Khan & Uzman Asif (November 2020) revealed a study titled “Effects of nomophobia on anxiety, stress and depression among Saudi medical students in Jed'dah, Saudi Arabia”. The analysis geared toward learning the prevalence of depression, anxiety and stress, in addition on analyse the consequences of demographics and nomophobia on depression, anxiety and stress among the chosen sample. The sample for the study consisted of 230 medical students inside the people of 19-25. The study concluded that there exists a high prevalence rate of anxiety, depression and stress with regards to the gender, Nomophobia as well as the residence type of the participants.

Manu Sharma, Amandeep, Devendra Mohan Mathur & Jitendra Jeenger (July 2019) published a research titled “Nomophobia and its relationship with depression, anxiety, and quality of life in adolescents”. The main purpose of the research was to understand the the prevalence of nomophobia and also study its impact on depression, anxiety, and quality of life among adolescent students. The findings from the study concluded a significant correlation between Nomophobia with respect to depression symptoms, anxiety and poor quality of life of the adolescents. Nomophobia was found as an emerging mental health condition especially in the adolescent population.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study of the relationship between social networking usage, nomophobia and depression symptoms is correlational study design which explores the relationship between the variables using statistical analysis without the manipulation of any variable. This is quantitative research which uses statistical techniques to analyse data collected through standardized questionnaires.

Statement of the Problem

To investigate the relationship between social networking usage, nomophobia and depression symptoms among young adults.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the relationship between social networking usage and nomophobia among young adults.
- To study the relationship between nomophobia and depression symptoms among young adults.
- To study the relationship between social networking usage and depression symptoms among young adults.
- To study the difference in social networking usage among males and females.
- To study the difference in nomophobia usage among males and females.
- To study the difference in depression symptoms among males and females.

Hypotheses

- H0: There is no significant relationship between social networking usage and nomophobia.
- H0: There is no significant relationship between Nomophobia and depression symptoms.
- H0: There is no significant relationship between social networking usage and depression symptoms.

Social Networking Usage, Nomophobia and Depression Symptoms among Young Adults

- H0: There is no significant difference between males and females for social networking usage.
- H0: There is no significant difference between males and females for nomophobia.
- H0: There is no significant difference between males and females for depression symptoms.

Operational Definition

- **Nomophobia:** Nomophobia is defined as “the fear of being out of mobile phone contact” (SecurEnvoy, 2012). The term, nomophobia, is an abbreviation for no-mobile-phone phobia and it was first coined during a study conducted in 2008 by the UK Post Office to investigate anxieties mobile phone users suffer (Secur Envoy, 2012).
- **Depression:** A mental health condition characterised by persistently depressed mood or loss of interest in activities causing significant impairment in daily life. Depression is a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, the way you think and how you act. Depression causes feelings of sadness and/or a loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed. It can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems and can decrease your ability to function at work and at home.
- **Social networking usage:** Social networking usage refers to online space that is used by people to connect, share, communicate, establish or maintain connection with others for academic, entertainment, socialization etc. Social networking can have a social purpose, a business purpose, or both, through sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram, among others

Variables

Independent variable: Age of the young adults

Dependent variable: Social networking usage, Nomophobia, Depression symptoms

Demographic variable: Gender

Universe of the Study

The Universe sample size consists of urban young adults within the age group of 18-25 years.

Geographical Area

For this study, urban young adults falling in the age group of 18 to 25 were selected from the city of Bangalore, India.

Sample Distribution

The study is conducted on young adults aged between 18 to 25 to identify the relationship between social networking usage, Nomophobia and depression symptoms. The research population consisted of young adults from Bangalore, India. The sample size is 200 which includes 100 females and 100 males.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Young adults who fall under the age group of 18 to 25 years.
- Individuals within the Bangalore city (urban population).
- Individuals who have been using two or more social networking sites on a daily basis.
- Both male and female genders were selected.

Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals below the age of 18 years and above the age of 25 years.
- Individuals who are not active users of social networking sites on a daily basis.
- Living outside Bangalore city.
- Individuals outside the gender binary.
- Rural population.
- Working business and marketing professionals who need to use social networking sites for longer duration for their job-related aspects.

Sample And Technique

The participants for the study were selected using convenience sampling and snowball sampling techniques. Informed consent of the participants were obtained through online consent form which was followed by that the collection of sociodemographic details of the participants. The participants were given three sets of questionnaires namely Social Networking Usage Questionnaire, Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q) and Beck's Depression Inventory with which the data was collected through google forms. There was no time limit given to the participants for filling up the google form, they were allowed to complete the questionnaires at their own pace. The responses of each participant were scored using Microsoft Excel and the statistical analysis were carried out using SPSS.

Research Ethics Followed

All the obtained data is relevant and research ethics prescribed by American Psychological Association (APA) was followed. The consent of the participant was taken prior to the filling of questionnaire. All the participants showed voluntary interest in data collection process. The participants were debriefed regarding the essentials of the research study. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained. Respect for privacy of the participant was maintained. It was assured that the current study would be of no harm to the participants. No physical or psychological harm was imposed or intended directly or indirectly on the participants.

Tools For the Study

1. **Beck's Depression Inventory:** Beck's depression inventory is one of the most widely used inventory in both research and clinical practice for assessing depression. The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) is a 21-item self-reporting questionnaire for evaluating the severity of depression in normal and psychiatric populations. Developed by Beck et al. in 1961, it relied on the theory of negative cognitive distortions as central to depression. It underwent revisions in 1978: the BDI-IA and 1996 and the BDI-II, both copyrighted. The questionnaire is calculated based on the scores obtained by the participant in various levels from 1-10 considered as normal whereas over 40 as extreme depression. The BDI-II does not rely on any particular theory of depression and the questionnaire has been translated into several languages. A shorter version of the questionnaire, the BDI Fast Screen for Medical Patients (BDI-FS), is available for primary care use.
2. **Social Networking Usage Questionnaire:** This questionnaire is developed by Savita Gupta & Liyaqat Baashir from Lovely Professional University, India. This questionnaire attempt to measure the social networking usage of an individual using a 5-point Lichard scale. There are 19 statements in this questionnaire. The internal consistency indices, Cronbach's alpha of social networking usage ($\alpha = .830$) indicates good internal reliability. The convergent validity of the questionnaire was found to be

between 0.593 to 0.894. The findings revealed that the questionnaire has significant psychometric features.

- 3. Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q):** Research examining problematic mobile phone use has increased markedly over the past 5 years and has been related to “no mobile phone phobia” (so-called nomophobia). The 20-item Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q) is the only instrument that assesses nomophobia with an underlying theoretical structure and robust psychometric testing. 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). These factors emerged from semi-structure interviews during the qualitative phase. Twenty items were then generated based on the qualitative phase and performed satisfactorily in the following quantitative phase. More specifically, the four-factor structure among the 20-item instrument was supported in an exploratory factor analysis. The Cronbach’s α was excellent across the entire NMP-Q ($\alpha = .945$) and in each factor ($\alpha = .814-.939$). Concurrent validity was achieved through its high correlation with Mobile Phone Involvement Questionnaire (MPIQ; $r = .71$; Yildirim & Correia, 2015). More recently, the NMP-Q was translated into Spanish, again showing acceptable psychometric properties (González-Cabrera et al., 2017).

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Over View

The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between social networking usage, nomophobia and depression symptoms among young adults.

It was hypothesized that;

- H0: There is no significant relationship between social networking usage and nomophobia.
- H0: There is no significant relationship between Nomophobia and depression symptoms.
- H0: There is no significant relationship between social networking usage and depression symptoms.
- H0: There is no significant difference between males and females for social networking usage.
- H0: There is no significant difference between males and females for nomophobia.
- H0: There is no significant difference between males and females for depression symptoms.

The study aimed at correlating the variables and also focused on exploring the differences of these three variables among males and females. The data for the research was collected from 200 participants including 100 males and 100 females who are from Bangalore, India. The obtained data was scored using standardised norms and statistical analysis was made using SPSS 15. Descriptive statistics was administered, Pearson correlation was used to find the relationship between the variables and independent sample t-test was used to study the gender difference.

Table 4.1: Descriptive statistics of Social Networking Usage, Nomophobia, Depression symptoms

	N	Mean	Std.Deviation
Social Networking Usage	200	65.1500	13.120
Nomophobia	200	83.455	21.811
Depression symptoms	200	10.53	9.217

Table 4.1 shows the N, Mean and SD of social networking usage, nomophobia and depression symptoms among young adults. N or the total number is 200. Mean for social networking usage is 65.15, mean for nomophobia is 83.45 and mean for depression symptoms is 10.53. The standard deviation/ SD score for social networking usage is 13.12, SD for nomophobia is 21.811 and the corresponding SD for depression symptoms is 9.27. Analysing the mean scores, it is seen that the participants have ‘above average’ scores in social networking usage, ‘moderate level’ score in nomophobia and ‘normal’ range of score in depression symptoms. The pie chart represented below shows that there is equal number of males and females in the selected sample, i.e., 100 males and 100 females.

Figure 4.1: Pie chart representing the number of males & females

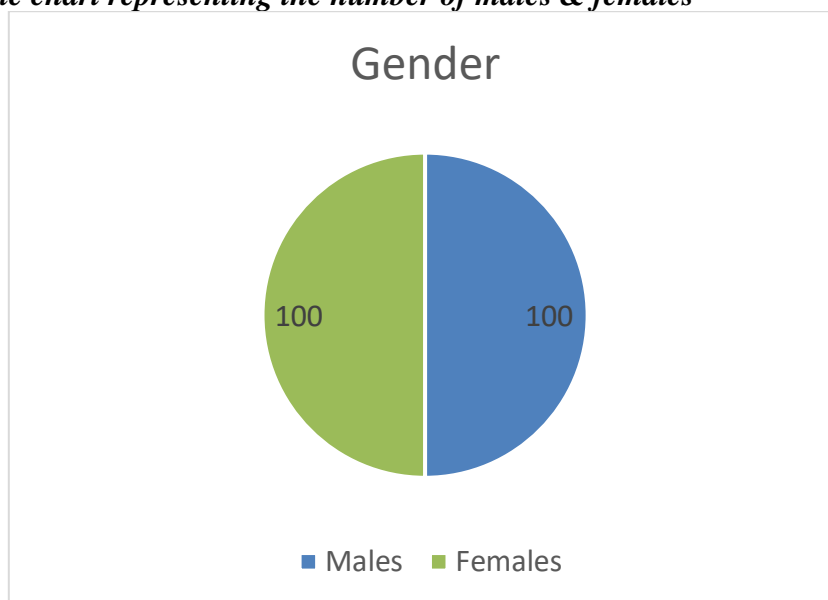


Table 4.2 Descriptive statistics for Females & Males for the three variables

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std.Error Mean
Social Networking Usage	Female	100	66.5000	12.25611	1.22561
	Male	100	63.8000	13.86078	1.38608
Nomophobia	Female	100	81.5500	22.67842	2.26784
	Male	100	85.3600	20.84746	2.08475
Depression	Female	100	10.5100	10.22820	1.02282
	Male	100	10.5500	8.13320	.81332

Social Networking Usage, Nomophobia and Depression Symptoms among Young Adults

Table 4.2 shows the mean, standard deviation and standard error mean between males and females for social networking usage, nomophobia and depression symptoms. In the social networking usage, the obtained mean is 66.5 and standard deviation of 12.256 for females and for males the obtained mean is 63.8 and 13.86 in standard deviation. The standard error for females in social networking usage variable is 1.22 and for the males it is 1.38 respectively. When it comes to the scores of the nomophobia variable, females have obtained a mean score of 81.5 with a SD of 22.67 and standard error of mean of 2.26, on the other hand males have obtained a mean score of 85.36, SD of 20.84 and standard error of mean of 2.084. The mean score of females for depression is 10.51 with a SD of 10.22 and standard error of mean of 1.02 whereas males have obtained a mean score of 10.55 and SD of 8.133 and standard error of mean of 0.813. There were equal number of males and females (100 males and 100 females).

Table 4.3 Showing the relationship between Social Networking Usage and Nomophobia.

Variables	p	r
Social networking usage	.000	.562**
Nomophobia		

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Table 4.3 shows the relationship between social networking usage and Nomophobia among young adults. Correlation coefficient and the corresponding p-value of social- networking usage with respect to Nomophobia is given. The *p* value 0.000 implies that there is significant relationship between social networking usage and Nomophobia with *r* value of .562**. Social networking usage is positively correlated with Nomophobia, which says that both the variables go in the same direction, i.e., when one variable increases the score of the other also increases. Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed). This means that the null hypothesis stating- 'H₀- There is no significant relationship between social networking usage and nomophobia' is rejected.

Table 4.4 Showing the relationship between Nomophobia and Depression symptoms.

Variables	p	r
Nomophobia	.028	.156*
Depression Symptoms		

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Table 4.4 shows the relationship between Nomophobia and Depression symptoms among young adults. Correlation coefficient and the corresponding p-value of Nomophobia with respect to Depression symptoms is given. The *p* value 0.028 implies that there is significant relationship between Nomophobia and Depression symptoms with *r* value of .156*. Nomophobia is positively correlated with Depression symptoms, which says that both the variables go in the same direction, i.e., when one variable increases the score of the other also increases. Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed). This means that the null hypothesis stating- 'H₀- There is no significant relationship between Nomophobia and Depression symptoms' is rejected.

Table 4.5 Showing the relationship between Social Networking Usage and Depression symptoms.

Variables	p	r
Social Networking Usage	.191	.093
Depression Symptoms		

Table 4.5 shows the correlation between Social Networking Usage and Depression Symptoms among young adults. The Pearson correlation was used to assess the relation between the variables. The r value obtained for social networking usage and depression symptoms is 0.093 and the p value obtained is 0.191 which implies that there is no significant correlation between the two variables at 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating “H0: There is no significant relationship between social networking usage and depression symptoms” is accepted.

Table 4.6 Showing the differences in Social Networking Usage among males and females

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	P
Social Networking Usage	Females	100	66.5	12.256	1.459	198	0.146
	Males	100	63.8	13.860			

Table 4.6 shows the difference between male and female with respect to social networking usage. The mean value and corresponding S.D of social networking usage among female and male participants are 66.65 (12.256) and 63.8 (13.860) respectively. It shows that the female participants are more on the edge of social networking usage than males. The t, df, p-value are 1.456, 198 and 0.145 respectively as on independent sample t-test. As p-value is more than 0.05 it can be concluded that there is no significant difference between male and female in social networking usage. Hence the null hypothesis stating “H0: There is no significant difference between males and females for social networking usage” is accepted.

Table 4.7 Showing the differences in Nomophobia among females and males

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	P
Nomophobia	Females	100	81.55	22.6	-1.237	198	0.218
	Males	100	85.3	20.84			

Table 4.7 shows the difference between females and males in Nomophobia. The mean value and corresponding S.D for nomophobia for female and male participants are 81.55(22.6) and 85.3(20.84) respectively. It shows male participants are more tend to have high score in nomophobia than female participants. The t, df, p-value are -1.237 ,198 and 0.218 respectively as on independent sample t-test. As p-value is more than 0.05 it can be concluded that there is no significant difference between male and female in nomophobia. Hence the null hypothesis stating “H0: There is no significant difference between males and females for nomophobia” is accepted.

Table 4.8 Showing the differences in Depression symptoms among females and males

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	P
Depression Symptoms	Females	100	10.51	10.22	-0.031	198	0.976
	Males	100	10.55	8.13			

Social Networking Usage, Nomophobia and Depression Symptoms among Young Adults

Table 4.8 shows the difference between females and males with respect to depression symptoms. The mean value and corresponding S.D for depression symptoms for female and male participants are 10.51(10.22) and 10.55 (8.13) respectively. The t, df, p-value are -0.031, 198 and 0.976 respectively as on independent sample t-test. As p-value is more than 0.05 it can be concluded that there is no significant difference between male and female in depression symptoms. Hence the null hypothesis stating “H0: There is no significant difference between males and females for depression symptoms” is accepted.

DISCUSSION

The objective of the current study was to investigate the relationship between social networking usage, nomophobia and depression symptoms among young adults.

The study focused at analysing the correlation between social networking usage and nomophobia; nomophobia and depression symptoms; social networking usage and depression symptoms. The study also looked into the gender differences precisely differences among males and females on the scores obtained for social networking usage, nomophobia and depression symptoms. The study excluded the individuals outside the binary gender. The age group selected for the study was young adults, specifically the ones that falls in the age group of 18 to 25. This age group of young adults are significant in this topic of research as they have been a huge part of the booming technological advancement in the area of “online life”. The individuals who are falling under this specific age group has experienced the transforming aspects of various social networking sites including Facebook, Whats app, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc. This specific population (especially concentrating on urban young adults) had access to these technologies mostly since their adolescent days and will have a greater understanding and exposure with the platform. Various studies across the last decade have tried to understand the impact of social networking usage and the risky elements associated with the same. There are various Cognitive Psychology studies that discusses and predicts the harmful effects of uncontrolled use of online platforms on human cognition including the neural activities like Memory, Thinking, Attention etc. While there is a wide spectrum of topics that has to be extensively studied under the subhead of social networking, this study brings an insight into the discussion “Nomophobia” as well as depression symptoms.

Nomophobia is defined as “the fear of being out of mobile phone contact” (SecurEnvoy,2012). The term, nomophobia, is an abbreviation for no-mobile-phone phobia and it was first coined during a study conducted in 2008 by the UK Post Office to investigate anxieties mobile phone users suffer (Secur Envoy, 2012). This research made use of the classic Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q) which is a 20-item scale developed by Yildirim and Correia for measuring the variable. The variable of social networking usage was measured using the 19-question scale developed by Savita Gupta & Liyaqat Baashir. The tool used for measuring the depression symptoms is the highly used self-administrable depression scale, i.e Beck’s Depression Inventory. One key aspect to be noted in this research is that the researcher is trying to find the social networking usage pattern and not any type of addictive behaviour. Also, there is no diagnosis of clinical depression is carried out in the study, instead the possibility of depressive mood/ symptoms is what is being focused.

The results of non-parametric correlation between the variables social networking usage and nomophobia shows a significant positive correlation. It means that the scores of one of the variables will have profound impact on the other. This result can be compared to the similar result obtained from the research conducted by Ayar, Dijle PhD, RN; Özalp Gerçeker et on

Social Networking Usage, Nomophobia and Depression Symptoms among Young Adults

nursing students. The particular study focused on the problematic internet usage and social media usage aspects. The study concluded that there is a direct correlation between nomophobia levels and the variables of problematic Internet use, social appearance anxiety, and social media use. Another study by Dr. Nehir Yasan and Dr. Soner Yıldır on Nomophobia among Undergraduate students in the Turkish State University also found a similar correlational style. Thus, the null hypothesis stating 'H₀-There is no significant relationship between social networking usage and nomophobia', is rejected.

Another correlational analysis done by the researcher was on the variables Nomophobia and depression symptoms. Statistical analysis showed a significant positive correlation between the two variables. This is one of the significant results. The result indicates the impact of Nomophobia/ anxiety due to recurrent and uncontrollable mobile phone usage on an individual's psychological self. It is very much essential to have a more detailed and multicentric studies to understand the dimensions of nomophobia as well the behavioural or psychological impact of the condition. A similar research finding was published by Mehmet Kara, Kemal Baytemir & Fatma Iceman-Kara. Their research pointed out the concept of loneliness and anxiety associated with nomophobia. Manu Sharma, Amandeep, Devendra Mohan Mathur & Jitendra Jeenger published a research on July 2019 using the same NMPQ questionnaire. The difference with the current study is that the selected population was adolescence from high school population. The researches also correlated anxiety and quality of life along with nomophobia. The results reject the null hypothesis stating "H₀-There is no significant relationship between nomophobia and depression symptoms". These finds foster a space for further understanding of the concept of nomophobia across various behavioural components. Most of the studies in the area of nomophobia are focusing on emerging adults and the adolescence as well as children. Notable aspect of all the literature is the research findings that shows highly problematic outcomes that can help in understanding the future intensity of the situation.

However, there was no correlation found between social networking usage and depression symptoms. This finding is opposing the various other researches that have shown pure positive correlation between the two variables. This means that the result accepts the null hypothesis stating, "H₀: There is no significant relationship between social networking usage and depression symptoms". An example of an opposing study is the one published by Brian A.Primac, ArielShensa,et.al in April 2017, the particular study focused on US young adults and showed a significant correlation between social networking usage and anxiety and depression symptoms.

The next set of statistical techniques used by the researcher focused on studying the differences among males and females among the scores in the three chosen variables. Independent sample t-test was administered to know the differences of scores among males and females for social networking usage. The scores indicated no significant difference in males and females for social networking usage, although it was found that female participants had slightly higher mean score than male participant but it was not significant on a higher scale. The results here go in line with findings by Müge ADNAN, Deniz Mertkan GEZGİN on a research conducted among Turkish University students. Thus, the null hypothesis stating, "H₀: There is no significant difference between males and females for social networking usage" is accepted.

Further, the data from independent sample t-test on nomophobia scores among males and females indicate a similar pattern as that of social networking usage. According to the data,

Social Networking Usage, Nomophobia and Depression Symptoms among Young Adults

there is no significant difference between male and female participants for nomophobia, thus accepting the null hypothesis, “H0- There is no significant difference between males and females for nomophobia.” There are few contradicting results from literature. A research was published by Ibrahim Arpaci on November 2020 focusing on the “gender difference in the relationship between problematic internet use and nomophobia”, the particular research concluded that females have more tendency to score higher in Nomophobia than males. On the contrary, the publication from by Manu Sharma, Amandeep, Devendra Mohan Mathur & Jitendra Jeenger on July 2019 shows an extreme opposite pattern where males had more tendency to score higher score in Nomophobia than females.

Finally, the research focused on the gender difference among scores on depression symptoms. The results indicated that there is no significant gender difference between males and females there by accepting the null hypothesis “H0-There is no significant difference between males and females on depression symptoms”. Again, there are studies that opposes these results and the ones that accepts this result. Findings from Ibrahim Arpaci’s study published on November 2020 showed that female participants had higher scores for depression scale than male participants.

The result in general have pointed out the problematic aspect of uncontrolled social networking usage which can impact in conditions including nomophobia and can lead to a mental health crisis including depression, anxiety, stress etc. It is the need of the hour to pay attention to one’s relationship with the usage of social networking platforms. Mindful and healthy technological use is highly recommended for avoiding adverse consequences which affects the psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction in general.

CONCLUSION

This study is conducted to investigate the relationship between Social Networking Usage, Nomophobia and Depression symptoms among young adults using Pearson correlation. The study specifically focused on young adults within the age group of 18 to 25. The study also finds the gender difference in Social Networking Usage, Nomophobia and Depression symptoms among young adults using independent sample t-test. Results from the study concludes that there is a significant positive correlation between Social Networking Usage and Nomophobia. There also exists a significant positive correlation between Nomophobia and depression symptoms. The results from this particular study shows no significant correlation between Social Networking Usage and Depression symptoms. Study also found that there is no significant difference between Social Networking Usage, Nomophobia and Depression symptoms among males and females.

Limitations of the Study

Although the study presented significant results, there are certain limitations involved with respect to the methodology of the study.

- Firstly, the sample size of the study was relatively small and are therefore not adequate for the generalization of findings.
- The sampling method adopted was convenience and snow ball sampling and is therefore highly prone to bias.
- Correlation does not equal causation. Instead of being just limited to correlation, the study could have also been explanatory research establishing a causal link.
- There is also a limitation of inability to generalize the results due to geographical barriers.

Social Networking Usage, Nomophobia and Depression Symptoms among Young Adults

- In person data collection would help in more authentic data collection than online method.

Implications

The findings of the present study can play a pivotal role in understanding and educating the young adults on the importance of the risk associated with suboptimal use of social networking sites. The concept of Nomophobia can be addressed on a larger scale and interventions can be made to deal with the condition. Psychoeducation on the impact of Nomophobia and mental health challenges associated with the uncontrolled technological exposure can be discussed and strategies to help those who face the condition can be made.

Above all the study shows scope in finding ways to deal with the present as well as the future emotional/psychological crisis that is possible to happen as an outcome of Nomophobia and extreme level of social networking usage. Taking necessary steps including mindful and optimal use of advanced technology like social networking can have infinite possibilities and opportunities for growth therefore educating and training both sides of the situation can save the coming generation from the dangers of the consequences.

Future Directions

- The study could be conducted on a larger population to see the variation in results.
- Research can be conducted on other factors associated with social networking usage and nomophobia.
- Research gap existing in the field of nomophobia can be addressed with correlational or causative studies on the variable.
- Study can be recreated on different age groups.
- Multicentric studies can be done to better understand the concept of “Nomophobia”.

REFERENCES

- Ayar, D., Özalp Gerçekler, G., Özdemir, E. Z., & Bektaş, M. (2018). The Effect of Problematic Internet Use, Social Appearance Anxiety, and Social Media Use on Nursing Students' Nomophobia Levels. *CIN: Computers, Informatics, Nursing*, 36, 1. <https://doi.org/10.1097/CIN.0000000000000458>
- Bano, N., Khan, A., Asif, U., de Beer, J., & Rawas, H. (2020). Effects of nomophobia on anxiety, stress and depression among Saudi medical students in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. *Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association*. <https://doi.org/10.47391/JPMA.983>
- Bashir, L., & Gupta, S. (2018). Social Networking Usage Questionnaire: Development and Validation in an Indian Higher Education Context. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 19, 214–227. <https://doi.org/10.17718/tojde.471918>
- Daei. (n.d.). *Nomophobia and health hazards: Smartphone use and addiction among university students*. Retrieved July 18, 2021, from <https://www.ijpvmjournal.net/article.asp?issn=2008-7802;year=2019;volume=10;issue=1;spage=202;epage=202;aulast=Daei>
- Depression*. (n.d.). <https://www.apa.org>. Retrieved July 18, 2021, from <https://www.apa.org/topics/depression>
- Depression*. (n.d.). Retrieved July 18, 2021, from <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/health-topics/depression>

Social Networking Usage, Nomophobia and Depression Symptoms among Young Adults

- Kara, M., Baytemir, K., & Inceman-Kara, F. (2021). Duration of daily smartphone usage as an antecedent of nomophobia: Exploring multiple mediation of loneliness and anxiety. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 40(1), 85–98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2019.1673485>
- Sharma, M., Amandeep, null, Mathur, D. M., & Jeenger, J. (2019). Nomophobia and its relationship with depression, anxiety, and quality of life in adolescents. *Industrial Psychiatry Journal*, 28(2), 231–236. https://doi.org/10.4103/ipj.ipj_60_18
- Yildirim, C., & Correia, A.-P. (2015). Exploring the dimensions of nomophobia: Development and validation of a self-reported questionnaire. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 49, 130–137. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.02.059>

Acknowledgement

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Bhattathirippad S & Patel N M (2021). Social Networking Usage, Nomophobia and Depression Symptoms among Young Adults. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 9(4), 570-584. DIP:18.01.055.20210904, DOI:10.25215/0904.055