

Influence of PUBG Usage on Nomophobia among Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

BGMI (formerly known as PUBG) is amongst the most popular games in the world, with over 400 million players worldwide. It's an online multiplayer game that's accessible to people of all ages and genders. Although the game offers an engaging virtual environment for individuals to interact with, it also has a number of negative consequences. As a result, players spend too much time in front of the screen, which interferes with their real-life relationships. Because they are continually interested in the game, people, particularly children, tend to grow socially isolated. They may be hesitant to engage in real-life conversations because they are uneasy. The main aim of the study was to find the influence of PUBG usage on nomophobia. The study consisted of 400 adolescents, who play BGMI (previously known as PUBG) and were selected from different schools in Mysuru. The current study used PUBG addiction test and Nomophobia Questionnaire for the collection of data. The authors visited various schools in Mysuru and permission was taken from the authorities to collect data. The PUBG addiction Test and Nomophobia Questionnaire were administered to the students with clear instructions. Students were asked to answer all the questions and confidentiality of responses was guaranteed. Following the collection of data, the data was scored and analyzed using Chi-Square test and One-way ANOVA test along descriptive statistics. The results revealed that about 93% of the participants had moderate to severe levels of Nomophobia. There were 28.8% of the participants were addict prone and definite addicts. Participants with different PUBG usage did not differ in their PUBG mean scores. The reasons behind the findings have been delineated in the study.

Keywords: *PUBG, BGMI, Nomophobia & Adolescents*

B GMI (previously known as PUBG) has been one of the most popular games that is played by more than 400 million people all over the world. It is an online multiplayer game that is open to all groups and genders. Although the game creates an interesting virtual environment for people to engage in, it also has various side effects. The game enhances a sense of curiosity among the players as well as provides instant gratification of being the last survivor which keeps people hooked on to the game. People, especially children are highly vulnerable to this addictive game. They end up playing for hours which has severe consequences in terms of physical and mental health, academics as well as hindering social relationships.

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The urge and compulsion for digital and video gaming has been classified as a mental health disorder by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2018. The addiction towards PUBG has drastically increased to an extent where there have been cases of suicide and self harm. Such games can lead to violent behavior which in turn affects their mental state. Studies show the suicide cases of three young males within the age range of 16-20 whose death is linked to PUBG addiction (Mamun, Ullah, Usman & Griffiths, 2020). Furthermore, studies have also shown that online games tend to provide a social environment for the players where strong friendships are established (Cole & Griffiths, 2007). Players perceive this to be a safe space to explore their personalities with different people while keeping their identity anonymous (Hussain & Griffiths, 2008).

As a result, players have excessive screen time which hinders their relationship with people in real life. People, especially children tend to become socially isolated as they are constantly engrossed in the game. They might not want to engage in real life conversations since they feel uncomfortable. One of the common opinions among online game addicts is that the system of objectives and accomplishments in multiplayer online games like PUBG is the most appealing element (D'Souza, Samyukta, & Meshak, 2019). As you progress through the game, the character gains experience points, levels up from one level to the next, collects riches and weapons, and grows wealthier and stronger. Excellent players obtain respect and attention from others in this social arena, gaining power and status (Nawaz, Nadeem, Rao, Fatima & Shoaib, 2020).

With the advent of technology, the smartphone has become a vital tool in our everyday lives, providing a wealth of entertainment and access to software (apps) that are specific to a platform. Smartphones are useful in our daily activities and play an important part in meaningful human interactions. However, there have been some serious and troubling concerns mentioned in relation to smartphone usage, such as checking smartphones constantly (González- Cabrera, León -Mejía, Pérez- Sancho, & Calvete, 2017). Nomophobia can be defined as “the fear of being unable to communicate through the mobile phone” (González- Cabrera, León-Mejía, Pérez-Sancho, Calvete, 2017, p.138). Therefore, nomophobia can be viewed as a specific phobia defined by the fifth edition of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) (Meshak, D'Souza & Manish, 2020). People addicted to using their phone are hooked on to it most of the time and also rely on their mobile phones for everyday functioning. Most people addicted to PUBG spend long hours on their mobile phones. They create a virtual social environment and establish relationships through online gaming which eventually keeps them constantly engaged to their smartphones. Smartphones are an all-in-one product where it can be used for communication, education, entertainment and business, etc. Hence, It is hypothesized that Participants with different usage of PUBG mobile significantly differ in their mean Nomophobia scores.

METHOD

Sample

The study consisted of 400 adolescents who play BGMI (previously known as PUBG) and are selected from different schools in Mysuru.

Tools employed

● **PUBG Addiction Test (PAT): D'Souza, Manish and Deeksha (2019)**

The PUBG Addiction Test developed by D'Souza, Manish and Deeksha (2019) was used for the study to measure the extent of PUBG addiction among adolescents. PAT consists of 34

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statements which measures 7 components namely, Disengagement, Lack of control, Excessive use, Obsession, Escapism, Over enthusiasm and Impulsive use. The answering pattern of PAT is a 5 point Likert scale which varies from Strongly disagree with a score of 5 to Strongly agree with a score of 1. The Cronbach's alpha value for the test was 0.912. When the item-to-total-score correlations were calculated, all of the correlation coefficients obtained using Pearson's product moment correlation techniques were found to be highly significant, showing that the PAT is reliable and valid.

● **Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q): Yildirim and correia (2015)**

The Nomophobia Questionnaire developed by Yildirim and Correia (2015) was used to measure the extent of Nomophobia among the participants. The test consists of 20 questions which measure 4 factors namely, Not being able to communicate, Losing connectedness, Not being able to access information and Giving up convenience. Each question is rated from Strongly disagree with a score of 1 to Strongly agree with a score of 7. The Cronbach's alpha value for the test was 0.945 while the value for each factor was ranging from 0.814 to 0.939. A score below 20 will be absence, 21-59 would be mild, 60-99 is moderate and 100 and above is severe.

Procedure

The authors visited various schools in Mysuru and permission was taken from the authorities to collect data. The PUBG addiction Test and Nomophobia Questionnaire were administered to the students with clear instructions. Students were asked to answer all the questions and confidentiality of responses was guaranteed. Following the collection of data, the data was scored and analyzed using Chi-Square test and One-way ANOVA test along descriptive statistics.

RESULTS

Table 1

Frequency and percent distribution of participants on levels of nomophobia and Chi-square test results

Levels of Nomophobia	Frequency	Percent	Test Statistics
Mild	28	7.0	X ² = 144.260 p= .001
Moderate	222	55.5	
Severe	150	37.5	

There were 55.5% of the participants with moderate levels of Nomophobia while we see 7% and 37.5% of the participants with mild and severe levels of Nomophobia. The chi-square test revealed a significant difference (X²=144.260; p= .001) which indicates that a higher number of participants had moderate levels of nomophobia in the group.

Table 2

Distribution of selected samples by levels of PUBG addiction and chi-square test result

Levels of PUBG addiction	Frequency	Percent	Test statistics
No addiction	3	0.8	X ² = 546.825 P= .001
Low usage	24	6.0	
Normal usage	258	64.5	
Addict prone	89	22.3	
Definite addict	26	6.5	

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Among participants, a majority of them had normal usage of PUBG, 22.3% of them were addict prone, 6.5% of them were definitely addicts, 6.0% of them had low levels of usage and only 0.8% of them did not have addiction to PUBG. The chi-square test revealed a significant difference ($X^2=3546.825$; $p=.001$) which indicates that the majority of the sample selected had normal usage of PUBG.

Table 3

Mean Nomophobia scores of selected samples by levels of PUBG addiction and One-way ANOVA test results

Levels of PUBG addiction	N	Mean	SD	F	p-value
No Addiction	3	76.00	22.271	.467	.760
Low Usage	24	89.96	25.722		
Normal Usage	258	90.40	21.257		
Addict prone	89	89.82	21.904		
Definite addict	26	93.35	21.674		
Total	400	90.33	21.659		

The mean scores obtained by participants with no addiction was 76.00 on nomophobia while the mean scores of participants with low usage and normal usage were 89.96 and 90.40 respectively. Furthermore, the mean scores of participants who were addict prone and definite addicts were found to be 89.82 and 93.35 respectively. The One-way ANOVA test revealed a non-significant mean difference ($F=.467$; $p=.760$) which indicates that the level of PUBG addiction of participants did not influence the mean scores on nomophobia.

DISCUSSION

Major findings

- About 93% of the participants had moderate to severe levels of Nomophobia
- There were 28.8% of the participants were addict prone and definite addicts
- Participants with different PUBG usage did not differ in their PUBG mean scores.

The present study shows that a majority of the participants have moderate to severe levels of Nomophobia. Nomophobia encompasses everything within the context of not being able to function without one's phone. People addicted to smartphones most often engage in behaviors such as constantly checking their phone and being irritated when they cannot access their phones (Meshak D'Souza & Manish, 2020). Smartphone have become an instrument that enables individuals to access versatile information with a few clicks. Since the pandemic, individuals of all age groups are forced to face the screens all day for work, education and schools. This has increased the use of smartphone, tablets and laptops. Although college students and working employees have an exposure to screens on a regular basis, it has been a new feature in children's lives. Due to online classes, children have begun to use smartphone, tablets and laptops as an academic requirement on a daily basis. The education system across the globe has become virtual due to the pandemic. Students attend online classes, submit their assignments online, use smartphones to study for exams and eventually use it for entertainment. Although, virtual learning is quite convenient, that is, easy to access and the child can learn at any given time, children might fall behind in social skills and behavior. Through online learning, students have the option to repeat a class more than once, however, they lack the real time interaction with the teacher in class. Through interaction in school with

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teachers and other classmates, children develop certain social and emotional skills. Adolescence is the period that needs emotional intelligence in order to cope with the physical and psychological changes that occur then. Studies have also shown that smartphone addiction is negatively associated with users' psychological well being. Studies also suggest that the excessive use of smartphones could have the paradoxical effect of diminishing the psychological wellbeing of the user (Herrero, Urueña, Torres & Hidalgo, 2019).

The results of the current study revealed that 28.8% of the participants were addict prone and definite addicts. The reason for the same could be due to the ban of PUBG in September 2020 in India. Although the game was banned citing a potential threat from apps that have a link with China, it might have helped in curbing the addiction towards the game. It has been reported that youngsters who play aggressive and violent games like PUBG are more prone to develop inhuman attitudes such as lack of empathy and war-related thoughts. The World Health Organization (WHO) recognised online gaming addiction as a serious mental health issue in 2018. Eye strain, weariness, headache, weight, poor quality of sleep, insomnia, withdrawal symptoms (anger and irritability), and even drug usage due to compulsive behavior are some of the well-known side effects of playing the PUBG video game. Unfortunately, this game obsession is causing the world's young people to invest their valuable time, money, and effort in a no-return company, necessitating immediate action (Al-Qahtani, Alenzi and Ali, 2020). Studies were able to predict Internet Gaming Disorder, ADHD and Generalized Anxiety Disorder with an accuracy of 93.18%, 81.81% and 84.9% respectively. The game statistics of PUBG players show strong positive correlation with internet Gaming Disorder and ADHD indicating detrimental effects of Multiplayer Online Battle Arena games (Aggarwal, Saluja, Gambhir, Gupta & Satia, 2020).

The present study clearly indicated that extent of PUBG usage did not influence the nomophobia among adolescents. Though not statistically significant, we find more nomophobia among definitely addicts to PUBG compared to adolescents without addiction. This fact can't be ignored as we find that more usage of PUBG may have significant influence over nomophobia. Adolescents have to be careful while playing BGMI to avoid its negative consequences, including nomophobia.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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