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Research Paper

# Always On, Always Trapped: Nomophobia and the Rising Tide of Stress

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## ABSTRACT

Nomophobia is defined as the fear or anxiety of being without access to one's mobile phone. It has emerged as a widespread behavioral phenomenon in the digital age. In this review we synthesized the findings from 35 empirical studies to investigate the prevalence of nomophobia and its association with stress. After utilizing the systematic search strategy and predefined inclusion criteria we identified the relevant studies from Google Scholar and analyzed them thematically. The results consistently indicated high levels of nomophobia with the majority of participants reporting moderate to severe symptoms. We found significant positive correlation between nomophobia and stress across diverse populations, including students, workplace employees, and others. Further, nomophobia was frequently linked with additional psychological factors such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, coping style, and impaired academic performance. These findings emphasize the urgent need for mental health interventions and targeted digital literacy programmes. To gain the deeper understanding and effectively addressing this emerging psychological concern, using multiple research methodologies like experimental, qualitative, longitudinal research etc. are recommended.

***Keywords:*** *Nomophobia, Stress, Smartphone Addiction, Digital Dependency, Psychological Distress, Student's Mental Health*

Smartphones have become an essential part of our daily life, transforming how people communicate, access information, work, and socialize. While they offer many benefits their constant presence has led to new psychological issues, one of the most notable is *nomophobia*, a term short for "No Mobile Phone Phobia." It refers to the fear or anxiety of being without access to one's mobile phone (King et al., 2013).

The term was first introduced in 2008 UK Post Office study conducted by YouGov which revealed that separation from mobile phone could trigger stress like symptoms (Notara et al., 2021). Since then, researchers are increasingly interested in studying this problem as it has become more common across the globe. Symptoms of nomophobia includes anxiety when unable to check one's phone, fear of losing connectivity or battery, and repeated checking

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even without alerts. In severe cases, being away from the phone can cause restlessness or panic (Rodríguez-García, Moreno-Guerrero, & Lopez Belmonte, 2020).

Nomophobia is seen not only as a behavioral habit but as a psychological issue and various mental health concerns such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, and stress (Jahrami et al., 2023). As smartphone use continues to rise this issue is gaining attention worldwide. According to some studies, around 21% of adults experience severe nomophobia (Notara et al., 2021), and university students appear to be more vulnerable due to their frequent smartphone use.

Smartphones are now used not just for communication but also for the work, education, entertainment, and social interaction. Being disconnected can feel like losing access to the important parts of life. The researchers have started to explore how this fear of disconnection relates to our emotional well-being, especially stress. *Stress* is the body's physical and emotional response to the pressure or perceived threat (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), and it has become increasingly common in our fast paced and digitally connected lives.

Although many studies have explored the causes and effects of nomophobia, very few have focused specifically on how it relates to psychological stress. This is a critical gap as stress is a major factor in mental and physical health. People who rely heavily on smartphones may increase its use during stress but they may also experience more stress because of frequent notifications, social expectations, or the fear of missing out (FoMO).

Some researchers have even pointed out that excessive smartphone use can be harmful but mobile phone also bring some benefits. For example, they can help people being more productive, access support and maintain relationships (Hessari et al., 2024). However, when this use becomes excessive it can negatively affect well-being. As Mudgal et al. (2024) observed, nomophobia is becoming one of the most common digital age problems. It affects the sleep, concentration, eating habits, and even physical health. In some ways, it is like addictions and can interfere with normal daily functioning.

Another important area is how we respond to nomophobia. While the condition is often treated as a personal issue, it is increasingly seen as a public health concern (Rodríguez-García et al., 2020). For example, it can affect people's job performance, academic outcomes, and interpersonal relationships. In workplaces particularly in healthcare and education, the inability to disconnect from phones may contribute to burnout or emotional exhaustion.

In recent years, the researchers from countries like Iran, Turkey, India, Spain, and China have expanded the field by using different methods measuring new variables and testing new interventions (Ll et al., 2021). However, there is still no consensus on how to best diagnose or treat nomophobia. More research is needed to understand its full impact and to develop targeted interventions.

This review aims to address these gaps by focusing specifically on the relationship between nomophobia and stress. By analyzing the empirical studies, we explore how nomophobia is measured, what populations are most affected, how prevalent is nomophobia, and how researchers explain its relationship to stress. In doing so, this review hopes to inform not

only future research but also interventions and policy initiatives in improving mental health in a digital world.

In conclusion, nomophobia is no longer just a buzzword, it is a growing psychological issue tied closely to the way we live in today's digital age. As smartphones are becoming even more important to our lives, understanding the impacts of their overuse, especially the stress, has become more crucial. By synthesizing the empirical findings, this review aims to shed light on this relation and inform future research, clinical interventions, and policy measures that promote balanced digital engagement and psychological resilience in an increasingly connected world.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We followed a structured process for this review to identify and synthesize the empirical research studies that examined the relationship between nomophobia and stress. The objective was to present a synthesis of the relevant studies in the field.

Through this review we aimed to address the following research questions-

1. What is the prevalence of nomophobia across different populations?
2. What is the nature of the relationship between nomophobia and stress?
3. What tools, populations, and methodologies have been used in existing research on nomophobia and stress?

### *Search Strategy*

We conducted a targeted search using Google Scholar, employing the allintitle command with search string ("Nomophobia" AND "Stress"). Due to limited access to the subscription based academic databases, Google Scholar was used as the sole source of research articles and papers. We conducted the final search on 19th May 2025. No restriction was applied on the publication year to allow comprehensive examination of the available studies. This strategy helped retrieve studies which explicitly mentioned both the terms in the title, to enhance the relevance to the study's purpose. However, it is important to note that Google Scholar does not allow the targeted search within abstracts; its allintitle function limits results to keywords found only in the title and its general search retrieves results based on the full text. As a result, studies that addressed nomophobia and stress in depth in the abstract or main text but not mentioned in the title may have been excluded. While the method ensured specificity, it may have narrowed the scope of the literature. Consequently, the search resulted a total of 41 records which formed the initial pool for screening and selection.

### *Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

We used the following criteria to refine the dataset-

**Included-**

- Empirical studies
- Studies published in English or with English abstracts
- Full Text or Studies for which sufficient information was available in the abstract

**Excluded:**

- Citations only entries
- Duplicate studies
- Review articles

- Studies that did not provide relevant data on nomophobia and stress

***Study Selection Process***

As shown in the flowchart (Figure 1), the initial search yielded 41 records. After removing the duplicates (n = 3), remaining 38 studies were screened based on the titles and abstracts. We excluded two irrelevant studies and one inaccessible study. We included two abstract only studies and four non English studies, ensuring that sufficient information was available, for all the other studies we referred to the full text. This process resulted in a final sample of 35 empirical studies that directly examined the relationship between nomophobia and stress.

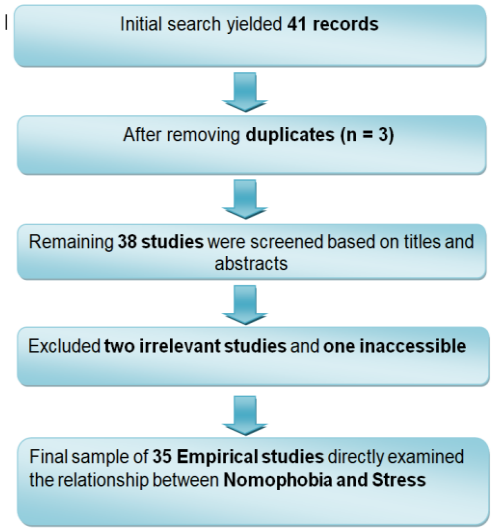


***Figure 1: Study selection process***

***Resolution of Disagreements***

The screening and data extraction were independently performed by the two authors of this paper. Each author reviewed all of the studies and flagged uncertain or borderline cases. This was done by using a coding system, where each author gave a coding to every study (0=exclude, 1=include, 2=uncertain). In cases of disagreement, the authors reached a decision after thorough discussion. Potential biases were mitigated by clearly defining inclusion criteria prior to screening, and by maintaining consistent documentation throughout the process.

***Characteristics of the Selected Studies***

As shown in Table 1 studies included in this review represent a diverse range of publication sources, geographies and timelines. The included articles span across various internationally recognized publishers such as Elsevier, Springer, MDPI, Wiley, Taylor & Francis and some regional and institutional journals, reflecting both global and localized attention to the issue. Also, the journals represent different disciplines including psychology, psychiatry, education, medicine, public health, technology, and computer sciences which highlights the interdisciplinary relevance of nomophobia and stress.

*Table 1: Studies identified for the review*

| S. No. | Publisher | Publication | Title | Authors | Year |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Elsevier | Computers in Human Behavior | Smartphone withdrawal creates stress: A moderated mediation model of nomophobia, social threat, and phone withdrawal context | Tams, Stefan; Legoux, Renaud; Leger, Pierre-Majorique; | 2018 |
| 2 | The International Journal of Indian Psychology | Redshine Publication | Evaluation of the Levels of Nomophobia and Academic Stress among Medical Students | Suresh, V. C., Kumar, A. K., C, P., & CR, Wilma Delphine Silvia; | 2019 |
| 3 | Biomedicine Online | Biomedicine | Prevalence of nomophobia and its association with stress, anxiety and depression among students | Sureka, V; Suma, S; Brinda, S; Bhagyashree, N; Ramya, K; Ganesh, M; | 2020 |
| 4 | SciELO Brasil | Revista Brasileira de Educacao Medica | Nomophobia among medical students and its association with depression, anxiety, stress and academic performance | Kubrusly, Marcos; Silva, Paulo Goberlanio de Barros; Vasconcelos, Gabriel Vidal de; Leite, Emanuel Delano Lima Goncalves; Santos, Priscilla de Almeida; Rocha, Hermano Alexandre Lima; | 2021 |
| 5 | Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association | J Pak Med Assoc | Effects of nomophobia on anxiety, stress and depression among Saudi medical students in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia | Bano, Nusrat; Khan, Muhammad Anwar; Asif, Uzma; de Beer, Jennifer; Rawass, Hawazen; | 2021 |
| 6 | Medknow | King Khalid University Journal of Health Sciences | Nomophobia associated with depression, anxiety, and stress in nursing students: A cross-sectional study in college of nursing, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia | Rawas, Hawazen; Bano, Nusrat; Asif, Uzma; Khan, Muhammad Anwar; | 2021 |
| 7 | Bağımlılık Dergisi | JOURNAL OF DEPENDENCE | Perceived stress and nomophobia in medical faculty students during COVID-19 pandemic | Aktas Terzioglu M, Toker Ugurlu T. | 2021 |
| 8 | MDPI | Healthcare | Post-traumatic stress disorder in Chinese teachers during COVID-19 pandemic: Roles of fear of COVID-19, nomophobia, and psychological distress | Kukreti, Shikha; Ahorsu, Daniel Kwasi; Strong, Carol; Chen, I-Hua; Lin, Chung-Ying; Ko, Nai-Ying; Griffiths, Mark D; Chen, Yu-Pin; Kuo, Yi-Jie; Pakpour, Amir H; | 2021 |
| 9 | Redshine Publication | International Journal of Indian Psychology | Nomophobia and its effects on stress and loneliness among young adults | Dahiya, Prerna; | 2021 |
| 10 | Mustafa A–ZGENEL | International Journal of Psychology and | The relationship between nomophobia and | Cakmak Tolan, O., & Karahan, S. | 2022 |

| S. No. | Publisher | Publication | Title | Authors | Year |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Educational Studies | depression, anxiety and stress levels of university students | | |
| 11 | Journal of Biochemical Technology | Journal of Biochemical Technology | Nomophobia and stress among Vietnamese high school students in Covid-19 pandemic: A mediation model of loneliness | Nguyen, Be Thi Ngoc; Nguyen, Tu Thi; Le, Uyen Thi Thanh; | 2022 |
| 12 | Dokuz Eylul University | Journal of basic and clinical health sciences | The Presence of Nomophobia in Assistant Health Staff Working in a Hospital and its Effect on Work Stress | Aslan, Tuba Korkmaz; Aslan, Kevser Sevgi Ãœnal; | 2022 |
| 13 | Society of Psychology and Education of Turkey (SPE) | Journal of Positive School Psychology | Severity of Nomophobia and its Association with Anxiety, Stress and Depression among Medical Students during the Covid-19 Pandemic. | Sasidharan, Aswin; Selvamani, Iniyan; Venkatraman, N; Bhupathi, Dinesh; Nesan, G Shiny Chrism Queen; Kavitha, P; | 2022 |
| 14 | CET-Bolivia | Horizontes Revista de Investigación en Ciencias de la Educación | Anxiety and stress in nomophobia of technical-productive education students from Lima, Peru | Molina, Lucila Pastor; | 2022 |
| 15 | Islamic Countries Society of Statistical Sciences (ISOSS) | Journal of ISOSS | Nomophobia, workplace stress and work engagement, role of emotional exhaustion and social threat among government and private employees | Afzal, S; Abid, A; Thakur, A; | 2022 |
| 16 | Springer | Current Psychology | Social support as a mediator in the relationship between perceived stress and nomophobia: An investigation among Malaysian university students during the COVID-19 pandemic | Lai, Samantha Arielle; Pang, Khong Yun; Siau, Ching Sin; Chan, Caryn Mei Hsien; Tan, Yee Kee; Ooi, Pei Boon; Ridzuan, Mohamad Ikhram Bin Mohamad; Ho, Meng Chuan; | 2023 |
| 17 | Springer | Journal of Technology in Behavioral Science | The relationship between nomophobia, emotional intelligence, interpersonal problem-solving, perceived stress, and self-esteem among undergraduate students | Karaoglan Yilmaz, Fatma Gizem; Yilmaz, Ramazan; Erdogdu, Fatih; | 2023 |
| 18 | MDPI | European Journal of Investigation in Health, Psychology and Education | Nomophobia and its association with Depression, Anxiety and Stress (DASS Scale), among young adults in Greece | Gnardellis, Charalambos; Vagka, Elissavet; Lagiou, Areti; Notara, Venetia; | 2023 |
| 19 | MDPI | Sustainability | Perceived Health and Nomophobia among Young Adults: The | Notara, Venetia; Vagka, Elissavet; Lagiou, Areti; | 2023 |

| S. No. | Publisher | Publication | Title | Authors | Year |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Mediating Role of Depression and Stress | Gnardellis, Charalambos; | |
| 20 | Medknow | Indian Journal of Social Psychiatry | Nomophobia and its association with stress and coping styles among undergraduate students of a medical college in New Delhi: A brief analysis | Gupta, Dimple; Bhardwaj, Akansha; Prakash, Rashmi; Jose, Nimmi A; Singh, Farishta Hannah D; | 2024 |
| 21 | Cambridge University Press | BJPsych Open | How Are FOMO and Nomophobia Linked to Symptoms of Depression, Anxiety and Stress Among University Students? | Alhaj, Hamid; Muthana, Abdelraouf; Abdalla, Asia; Marouf, Menna; Awad, Nisreen; | 2024 |
| 22 | Wiley Online Library | Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice | The effect of nomophobia levels on nursing students' depression, anxiety and stress levels | Yigit, Deniz; Cakirli, Merve; Acikgoz, Ayfer; | 2024 |
| 23 | Data-Driven Education Research | Journal for Social Science Archives | Smartphone Induced Anxiety: An Investigation into Nomophobia and Stress Levels Among Universities Students | Akram, Muzammila; Mahmood, Waqas; Saleem, Ayesha; | 2024 |
| 24 | Medknow | Indian Journal of Community Medicine | IJCM_342A: Nomophobia and its Relationship with Depression, Anxiety and Stress among Undergraduate Medical Students Of Murshidabad Medical College, West Bengal: A Cross Sectional Study | Ahamed, Tousif; Ghosh, Ritu; Das, Malay Kumar; Das, Dilip Kumar; | 2024 |
| 25 | Universitas Indraprasta PGRI & Indonesia Counselor Association | TERAPUTIK: Jurnal Bimbingan dan Konseling | Academic Stress and Nomophobia: Their Impact on Online Gaming Intensity on college students | Putri, Hadia; Yandri, Hengki; Harmalis, Harmalis; | 2024 |
| 26 | Taylor & Francis | The Journal of Psychology | Digital reflections: narcissism, stress, social media addiction, and nomophobia | Maftei, A., & Patrausanu, A. M. ; | 2024 |
| 27 | Taylor & Francis | International Journal of Humanâ€“Computer Interaction | Nomophobia questionnaire short-form: psychometric properties and longitudinal association with anxiety, stress, and depression in adolescents | Caba-Machado, V., Machimbarrena, J. M., Díaz-López, A., Sevilla-Fernández, D., Pérez-Sancho, C., & González-Cabrera, J. | 2024 |
| 28 | psychopedia | International Journal of Interdisciplinary Approaches in Psychology | Nomophobia and its Relation with Personality, Social Anxiety, and Stress Among Young and Middle-Aged Adults | Thakur, Vironika; | 2024 |
| 29 | MDPI | International journal of environmental research and public health | Smartphone use and social media involvement in young adults: association with nomophobia, depression anxiety stress | Vagka, Elissavet; Gnardellis, Charalambos; Lagiou, Areti; Notara, Venetia; | 2024 |

| S. No. | Publisher | Publication | Title | Authors | Year |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | scales (DASS) and self-esteem | | |
| 30 | Oxford University Press | Innovation in Aging | NO PHONE, MORE STRESS: EXPLORING ANXIETY AS THE MEDIATOR BETWEEN NOMOPHOBIA AND STRESS | Shaleha, Rinanda; Roque, Nelson; | 2024 |
| 31 | Child and Adolescent Clinical Psychology Forum | Journal of Rooyesh-e-Ravanshenasi Journal(RRJ) | The relationship between perceived stress and nomophobia with the mediating role of social support in students | Qanbary Joopish, Massoumeh; Aparkhide, Niusha; Mousavi, Seyedeh Maryam; | 2024 |
| 32 | Elsevier | Nursing Outlook | Fear of lacking access to mobile devices (nomophobia): A preliminary study of prevalence, predictors, and relationship to perceived stress in nursing students | Ayaz-Alkaya, Sultan;Köse Kabakcıoğlu, Neslihan; Terzi, Handan; | 2025 |
| 33 | Journal of Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences | Journal of Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences | The Relationship Between Nomophobia, Perceived Stress, and Perceived Social Support Among Medical Students at Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences | Barzegari, Saeed; Mahdavi, Seif Ali; Mousazadeh, Noushin; Alinejad, Masoume; Hasani, Seyed Alireza; Alaedini Shourmasti, Kamaledin; | 2025 |
| 34 | Health Sciences University Gaziosmanpaşa Education and Research Hospital | Journal of Academic Research in Nursing | Frequency of Nomophobia in Pregnant Women and its Relationship with Depression, Anxiety, and Stress | Aker MN, Sezer NY | 2025 |
| 35 | Shahid Sadoughi University of Medical Sciences | The Journal of Tolooebehdasht | Predicting Nomophobia Based on Early Maladaptive Schemas Considering Depression, Anxiety and Stress in the Youth | Reisi, Rahele; Moghimian, Maryam; | 2025 |

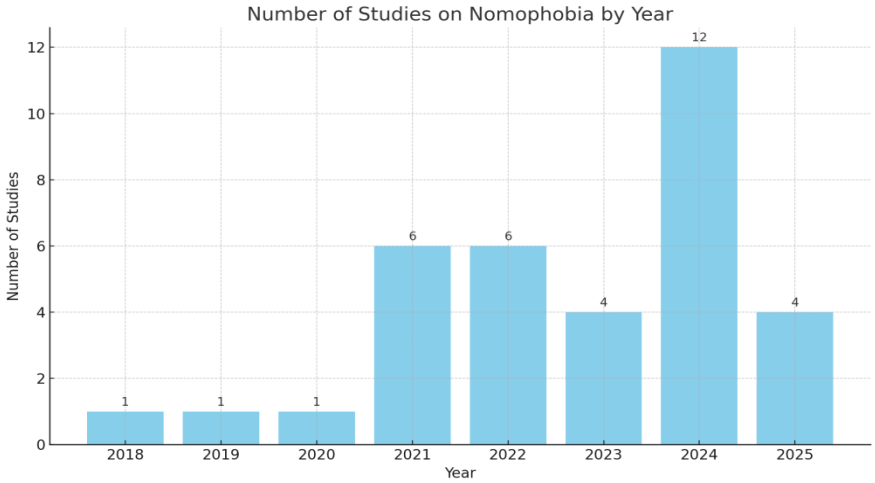


*Figure 2: Number of studies by year*

In Figure 2 : Research on nomophobia and stress has grown significantly in the recent years and has shown a clear temporal trend. Only one study was published in 2018 and one in 2019 followed by a modest increase in 2020. From 2021 onwards, there was a marked rise in research, showing a notable peak in 2024 which recorded 12 publications accounting for one third of all studies included in this review. This reflects the increasing interest in understanding the psychological consequences of excessive smartphone dependence. As of May 2025, four studies have been published. Since this represents only the first five months of the year it is likely that the total research for 2025 will continue the upward trend.

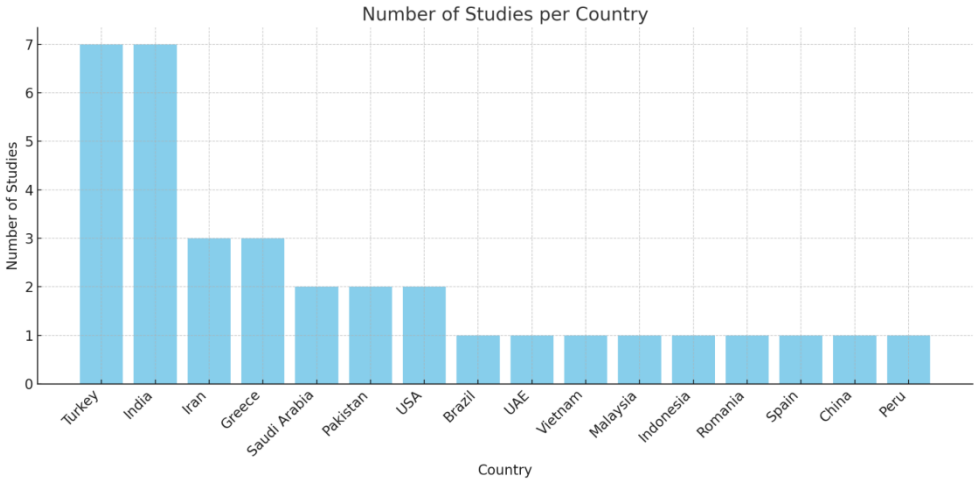


***Figure 3: Number of Studies per Country***

As shown in Figure 3, The highest number of studies were conducted in Turkey and India, each contributing seven studies. This highlights a growing research interest in nomophobia and its psychological correlates in these regions. Iran and Greece followed with three studies, while Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and USA contributed two studies each. Countries such as Brazil, UAE, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Romania, Spain, China and Peru were represented by single studies. This distribution reflects mainly Asia centric and Euro-Mediterranean research focus, with limited representation from African or Oceanic countries

### *Data Extraction and Synthesis*

For each included study, the relevant information was extracted and organized under the key categories such as authorship, year of publication, country, sample characteristics, research design, measurement tools, and key findings.Also a matrix-based approach was used to synthesize the findings and identify the patterns in prevalence, associations, and methodological rigor.

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This section presents the key findings derived from the systematic review of 35 empirical studies that explored the prevalence of nomophobia and its relationship with stress. The results were thematically organized to highlight the patterns across populations, methodologies and key outcomes. While the primary focus was on understanding the nomophobia and its psychological correlates, particular attention was given to study design, tools used, and emerging research gaps and future direction. A detailed analysis matrix summarizing all included studies is provided in the Appendix-A for reference.

We identified five themes and the analysis based on them is presented below.

***Theme 1: Prevalence of Nomophobia***

The reviewed studies consistently highlighted the widespread prevalence of nomophobia across diverse populations and cultural contexts. The main focus was among students, particularly in healthcare and academic settings.

**High Prevalence in Student Populations:** Several studies confirmed that nomophobia is almost universal among students, with the majority reporting moderate to severe levels. In Brazil, Kubrusly et al. (2021) found that 99.7% of medical students experienced some level of nomophobia, with 64.5% at moderate and 11.8% at severe levels. Similarly, Gupta et al. (2024) observed that 99.5% of Indian medical students were affected with 59.9% moderate and 15.2% severe. In Vietnam, Nguyen et al. (2022) reported 99.3% prevalence among high school students including 23.6% with severe symptoms. In Iran, Barzegari et al. (2025) and Qanbary Joopish et al. (2024) both confirmed high rates, with Barzegari showing 56% moderate, 31.1% severe, and 12.8% mild nomophobia.

Among students from specialized academic streams, Suresh et al., (2019) documented high nomophobia among Indian medical students. Putri et al. (2024) observed that 61% of Indonesian technical students had moderate nomophobia. Molina (2022) confirmed widespread nomophobia among Peruvian technical productive education students with varied psychological associations.

The COVID-19 pandemic may have intensified this pattern. Sasidharan et al. (2022) reported 100% prevalence among medical students in India with 19.2% experiencing severe levels. Among Saudi nursing students, Rawas et al. (2021) found 46.9% moderate and 40.2% severe nomophobia. Ayaz-Alkaya et al. (2025) identified that 48% of the nursing students had moderate and 24.5% had severe nomophobia.

**Nomophobia Beyond the Student Population:** Nomophobia was also found in other demographics. Aker and Sezer (2025) reported that 62.3% of pregnant women experienced mild nomophobia.In the healthcare workforce, Aslan and Aslan (2022) identified significant dependency among hospital staff. Among working professionals, Afzal et al. (2022) found high prevalence across private and public sector employees while Tams et al. (2018) observed the psychological impact of nomophobia among young business professionals in the U.S.

**Gender and Age Differences:** Gender based differences are frequently noted. Studies by Tolan and Karahan (2022), Gupta et al. (2024) and Alhaj et al. (2024) all observed higher nomophobia levels among female students. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Terzioğlu and Uğurlu (2021) reported a reverse of this pattern, with higher prevalence among male medical students. Age was another factor, as the study by Caba-Machado et al. (2024) showed significantly higher nomophobia among adolescent girls and mid adolescents, and Thakur (2024) found moderate levels across all age groups, highest among young adults.

***Theme 2: Relationship Between Nomophobia and Stress***

A consistent finding across the reviewed literature is the positive association between nomophobia and stress. Studies using standardized measures such as the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21) have demonstrated that higher nomophobia levels often correspond with increased stress.

In Brazil, Kubrusly et al. (2021) found a statistically significant positive correlations between nomophobia and stress among medical students. Similarly, Tolan and Karahan (2022) identified nomophobia as a significant predictor of stress in university students with gender and smartphone usage duration as relevant factors. Among Indian students, Gupta et al. (2024) reported a strong association between perceived stress and nomophobia, while Ayaz-Alkaya et al. (2025) confirmed this relationship in nursing students.

Further confirming this trend, Alhaj et al. (2024) and Yigit et al. (2024) also observed positive correlations between nomophobia and stress among healthcare and nursing students in the UAE and Turkey, respectively. Among Vietnamese high school students, Nguyen et al. (2022) noted that stress levels increased with nomophobia severity. In India, both Dahiya (2021) and Sasidharan et al (2022) found significant associations between stress and nomophobia severity.

Workplace contexts reveal similar findings. Afzal et al. (2022) reported a strong correlation between nomophobia and workplace stress, mediated by emotional exhaustion, while Aslan and Aslan (2022) noted a direct relationship between nomophobia and work-related stress among healthcare professionals. Kukreti et al. (2021) emphasized the moderating effect of nomophobia in the relationship between fear of COVID-19 and PTSD among Chinese teacher. In a unique population, Aker and Sezer (2025) found that nomophobia significantly influenced stress among pregnant women.

A few studies reported divergent findings. Molina (2022) found no significant predictive value of stress on nomophobia among technical productive education students and Karaoglan Yilmaz et al. (2023) observed a weak correlation, possibly due to differences in sample or context.

Several studies explored mediating mechanisms. Dahiya (2021) found a significant positive correlation between nomophobia and stress and loneliness, suggesting a broader emotional impact. Nguyen et al. (2022) and Shaleha and Roque (2024) showed that loneliness and anxiety, respectively, mediated the relationship between nomophobia and stress, with the latter accounting for 69.24% of the effect. Afzal, Abid and Thakur (2022) further identified emotional exhaustion as a mediator and social threat as a moderator. Qanbary Joopish et al. (2024) added that social support mediates the link between stress and nomophobia, while Reisi and Moghimian (2025) showed that early maladaptive schemas predict nomophobia through stress, depression and anxiety in young adults.

Lastly, a longitudinal study by Caba-Machado et al. (2024) linked nomophobia to increasing symptoms of anxiety, stress and depression among adolescents, strengthening the evidence of its long term psychological impacts.

### *Theme 3: Other Psychological and Behavioral Variables Studied Alongside Nomophobia and Stress*

While the primary focus has been on stress in relation to nomophobia, several studies have explored additional constructs situating nomophobia within a broader psychosocial framework. Anxiety and depression emerged as the most frequently studied variables, appearing in more than half of the reviewed studies (Kubrusly et al., 2021; V et al., 2020; Tolan & Karahan, 2022; Rawas et al., 2021; Notara et al., 2023; Aker et al., 2025; Yigit et al., 2024; Aker & Sezer, 2025; Afzal et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2022).

Other constructs received moderate attention. coping strategies (Gupta et al., 2024), academic performance (Kubrusly et al., 2021), loneliness (Nguyen et al., 2022; Phan et al., 2022), and emotional exhaustion (Afzal et al., 2022). More selectively examined variables included FoMO (Alhaj et al.,2024), self-esteem (Gnardellis et al, 2023; Vagka et al., 2024), social media addiction and narcissism (Maftei & Pătrăușanu, 2024), and interpersonal skills (Karaoglan Yilmaz et al., 2023).

Additional correlates include socioeconomic status and personality traits (Thakur, 2024), smartphone related behaviors like screen time, recharge spending and self-perceived dependence (Sasidharan et al., 2022), perceived health and fear of COVID-19 (Notara et al, 2023; Kukreti et al., 2021) and social threat and smartphone withdrawal contexts (Tams et al., 2018).

This distribution highlights a research trend concentrated on psychological distress with limited but growing interest in positive psychological resources, social functioning and behavioral predictors. Future research should expand by focusing on emotional factors (e.g. resilience, emotional intelligence), developmental influences (e.g. age, SES) and behavioral patterns (e.g., digital literacy, usage motives) to deepen understanding of nomophobia's psychological and contextual correlates.

Unlike much of the existing cross-sectional research, Tams, Legoux, and Léger (2018) used an experimental design to show that nomophobia leads to stress through a sense of social threat, especially when individuals face uncertainty and low control. However, when participants were given more situational control and information this effect was no longer significant. This highlights the importance of cognitive context in how nomophobia contributes to stress. Similarly, early maladaptive schemas (Reisi & Moghimian, 2025) and social support (Qanbary Joopish et al., 2024) were identified as mediators or predictors, highlighting deeper psychosocial mechanisms. Gnardellis et al. (2023) also emphasized the bidirectional relationship between self-esteem and DASS symptoms in context of nomophobia. Notara et al. (2023) linked high nomophobia to various self reported health concerns, while Maftei and Pătrăușanu(2024) provided developmental insight by including both post secondary and university students.

***Theme 4: Measurement Tools and Methodological Patterns***

**Research Designs and Analytical Approaches:** Among the 35 reviewed studies, most of them employed quantitative cross sectional designs focusing on nomophobia's associations with psychological variables. Only one study used the experimental design (Tams et al., 2018), one was longitudinal (Caba-Machado et al., 2024) and one adopted a mixed method descriptive approach (Aslan & Aslan, 2022). Though some applied mediation, regression (Shaleha & Roque, 2024; Tams et al., 2018) and structural equation modeling (Qanbary Joopish et al, 2024; Reisi & Moghimian, 2025) and no qualitative research was identified showing a significant gap in capturing subjective experiences of nomophobia.

**Measurement of Nomophobia:** The Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q), developed by Yildirim and Correia (2015), was the most widely used instrument, used in nearly all the studies. These studies included those by Kubrusly et al. (2021), Tolan and Karahan (2022), Yigit et al.(2024), Ayaz-Alkaya et al. (2025) and Gupta et al. (2024). This 20 item tool assesses nomophobia across four domains- not being able to communicate, losing connectedness, not being able to access information and giving up convenience.

Some studies used translated and psychometrically validated versions of the NMP-Q, confirming its adaptability across cultural contexts such as Turkey, India, Brazil and China. Some deviations included a short form version used in longitudinal research (Caba-Machado et al., 2024), a custom self administered version (Akram et al, 2024) and a pre-designed tool modeled on early frameworks (V. et al., 2020). Tams et al. (2018) also used a questionnaire based on earlier literature and integrated it with a moderated mediation model, which contributed to methodological diversity.

**Assessment of Stress and Related Constructs:** Stress was primarily measured via DASS-21 (Kubrusly et al., 2021; Tolan & Karahan, 2022; Yigit et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2022; Aker & Sezer, 2025; Sasidharan et al., 2022; Kukreti et al., 2021) and PSS (Gupta et al., 2024; Ayaz-Alkaya et al., 2025; Maftei & Pătrăușanu, 2024; Barzegari et al., 2025; Terzioğlu et al., 2021). Other tools included WSS (Aslan and Aslan, 2022), EPGE-1 (Molina, 2022), SSRS (Thakur, 2024), and Cohen's Stress Scale (V. et al., 2020).

Several studies assessed broader psychological correlates- API (Kubrusly et al., 2021) coping styles (Brief COPE) (Gupta et al., 2024), loneliness (UCLA) (Nguyen et al., 2022; Phan et al., 2022), emotional exhaustion (Afzal et al., 2022), media addiction using SMA (Maftei et al., 2024) and social support (MSPSS) (Lai et al., 2023; Afzal et al., 2022; Qanbary Joopish et al., 2024). Others examined self-esteem (RSES) (Gnardellis et al., 2023; Vagka et al., 2024), personality traits (Big Five) (Thakur, 2024), physical health using PHQ (V. et al, 2020; Notara et al., (2023), anxiety traits (IDARE) (Molina, 2022), social anxiety (SIAS) (Thakur, 2024), (IOFPS (Putri et al., 2024) and FoMO (Alhaj et al., 2024). Pandemic-related stress was addressed using the FCV-19S (Kukreti et al., 2021).

**Populations and Sampling Methods:** Most studies sampled university students, especially from medical and nursing programs (Kubrusly et al., 2021; Ahamed et al., 2024; Ayaz-Alkaya et al., 2025). Others included general college students (Lai et al., 2023; Yigit et al., 2024), high schoolers (Phan et al., 2022) and adolescents (Caba-Machado et al., 2024). Non-student populations were less common, but included working professionals (Afzal et al., 2022), pregnant women (Aker & Sezer, 2025) and occupational settings (Aslan & Aslan, 2022).

Sample sizes ranged from 44 (Dahiya, 2021) to over 2,600 (Kukreti et al., 2021), typically between 200-600. Most used non probabilistic sampling, especially convenience (Karaoglan Yilmaz et al., 2023; Maftei & Pătrăușanu, 2024) and purposive techniques (Reisi & Moghimian, 2025; Gupta et al, 2024). A few researchers used stratified (Nguyen et al., 2022; Ahamed et al., 2024) or simple random sampling (Sasidharan et al., 2022).

Validated tools like the NMP-Q and DASS-21 support cross study comparisons. Yet, the overwhelming dependence on cross sectional, self-report methods and non random sampling limits causal inference and generalizability. The absence of qualitative or mixed-method research restricts deeper understanding of nomophobia's psychological and contextual dimensions. Future research should prioritize longitudinal, experimental, and qualitative designs to bridge these gaps.

### *Theme 5: Interventions, Implications, and Future Research Directions*

The growing literature on nomophobia highlights not only its widespread prevalence and psychological impact but also the urgent need for targeted interventions, preventive strategies and an expanded research agenda. Reviewed studies proposed multi level

responses-ranging from clinical and educational interventions to methodological innovations to address the complexities of nomophobia across various populations.

**a. Interventions and Preventive Measures:** A recurring recommendation is the implementation of **educational programs and awareness campaigns**. For example, Kubrusly et al. (2021), and Dahiya (2021) urge for the public policies to raise awareness about the risks of excessive smartphone use. Tolan and Karahan (2022) recommend school-based seminars and public service announcements to reduce the stigma. Similarly, V. et al. (2020), and Gupta et al. (2024) advocate for structured counseling, psychoeducational support and therapies like cognitive behavioural therapy (Bano et al., 2021) especially for adolescents and young adults. Again, Bano et al. (2021) suggested wellness centers be established for students on their campuses and campaigns such as 'Digital detox challenge' and 'No phone zone'.

Some studies call for **population specific interventions**:

- **Nursing and medical students**: At risk groups, due to high academic pressure and digital demands (Yigit et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2022; Barzegari et al., 2025).
- **Pregnant women**: Screen for and manage nomophobia during prenatal care (Alhaj et al., 2024; Aker & Sezer, 2025).
- **Workplace settings**: Address nomophobia's impact on employee stress and engagement (Afzal et al., 2022).
- **Early-stage interventions**: Dahiya (2021), Bano et al. (2021) and Suresh et al., (2019) recommended initiating preventive efforts in families, schools and health systems. Training for appropriate use of phones should start in early and middle adolescence, and even in childhood before the age of 10.

Other studies urge a stronger focus on **intervention design and evaluation**:

- Maftei et al. (2024) and Nguyen et al. (2022) recommended developing programs targeting nomophobia along with co-occurring issues like loneliness and social media addiction.
- Akram et al. (2024) advocate promoting alternative health behaviors (e.g. mindfulness, exercise).
- Aslan and Aslan (2022) and Putri et al. (2024) suggest institutional strategies in healthcare and educational contexts to foster healthier tech habits.

Reisi & Moghimian (2025) recommended screening for maladaptive schemas in youth and Qanbary Joopish et al. (2024) highlighted the role of social support systems as buffers. Terzioğlu & Uğurlu (2021) stress the importance of coping and social support skills for the students. Gnardellis et al. (2023) emphasize integrated digital literacy programs and warn about the mental health impact of nomophobia.

**b. Implications for Future Research:** A key gap across studies is the lack of longitudinal research. Authors such as Nguyen et al. (2022), Maftei et al. (2024), Afzal et al. (2022) and Shaleha & Roque (2024) highlight the need to trace the long-term effects of nomophobia on mental health, academics and workplace functioning.
Other suggested directions include-

- **Multi-method research**: Thakur (2024) called for combining behavioral and physiological measures with self-report data.
- **Contextual diversity**: Karaoglan Yilmaz et al. (2023) and Vagka et al. (2024) urged exploration across professional, age and cultural groups.

- **Policy and institutional action**: Notara et al (2023) and Kukreti et al. (2021) advocated for interventions in educational and occupational settings.
- **Sampling and methodology**: Lai et al. (2023) recommended stratified and randomized sampling for greater representativeness.

Overall, the literature calls for integrating nomophobia awareness and prevention into mental health, educational and workplace wellness frameworks. Addressing this phenomenon requires not only individual level psychological support but also structural, institutional and cultural changes to promote the balanced digital behavior. Overcoming current methodological limitations such as cross-sectional designs, non-representative samples and self reported data will be essential for building a more robust understanding of this emerging psychological concern.

## DISCUSSION

The present review affirms that nomophobia has emerged as a significant psychological concern in today's digitally connected world, particularly among youth and students in healthcare and academic disciplines. High prevalence rates, often exceeding 90% have been reported in countries such as Brazil, India, Iran and Vietnam (Kubrusly et al., 2021; Gupta et. al, 2024; Barzegari et al., 2025; Nguyen et al., 2022), highlighting the global relevance of this issue. Gender and age difference are also consistently observed, with females and adolescents frequently reporting higher severity levels (Caba-Machado et al., 2024; Alhaj et al., 2024), although some exceptions was there (Terzioğlu et al., 2021).

Stress consistently emerged as the strongest correlate of nomophobia. Nearly all reviewed studies demonstrated a significant positive association (Tolan & Karahan, 2022; Ayaz-Alkaya et. al., 2025; Aker & Sezer, 2025). Several studies also identified mediators and moderators, such as loneliness (Nguyen et al., 2022), emotional exhaustion and perceived social threat (Afzal et. al., 2022; Tams et al., 2018), as well as more recent variables like social support (Qanbary Joopish et al., 2024) and early maladaptive schemas (Reisi & Moghimian, 2025). These findings indicate a complex psychological profile, positioning nomophobia within broader frameworks of emotion regulation, coping mechanisms and mental health vulnerability.

Beyond stress, nomophobia has also been linked with anxiety, depression, low self esteem and impaired perceived health (Gnardellis et al., 2023; Notara et al., 2024; Maftei & Pătrăușanu, 2024). These associations reinforced the understanding of nomophobia as more than just a problematic phone use; it is a psychological condition shaped by cognitive, emotional and interpersonal factors.

Methodologically, the literature is dominated by cross sectional quantitative studies using self-report tools, particularly the Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q). While this allows for comparison across studies, it limits causal interpretation and may overlook subjective experiences and emerging behaviors. Few studies employed experimental (Tams et al., 2018), longitudinal (Caba-Machado et al., 2024) or structural modeling approaches (Qanbary Joopish et al., 2024). Qualitative investigations remain almost absent representing a critical gap.

The demographic scope of existing research is also narrow. Most of the studies focused on university students especially those in medical and nursing programs. Other populations such as working adults, students in non healthcare fields or culturally diverse communities

are underrepresented (Aslan & Aslan, 2022; Dahiya, 2021; Reisi & Moghimian, 2025). This limits the generalizability of current findings and highlights the need for broader and more inclusive sampling in future research.

Recommendations from the literature frequently call for multi-level interventions. These include psychoeducation on responsible smartphone use, digital well-being programs in academic settings, therapeutic techniques like mindfulness and institutional policies to support healthy digital habits (Akram et al., 2024; Yigit et al., 2024). However, a few of these strategies have been empirically tested which points toward another important research need.

### *Strengths and Limitations of the review*

While the study applied rigorous screening criteria and covered a broad timespan, several limitations should be acknowledged. The exclusive reliance on Google Scholar, due to lack of access to subscription based databases, may have limited the comprehensiveness of the search. The use of the allintitle command, while enhancing relevance, may have excluded studies that discussed nomophobia and stress in detail within the abstract or full text but did not include both terms in the title.

Additionally, some included studies were based solely on abstracts due to language or access constraints, which may have restricted the depth of analysis in those cases. The predominance of cross sectional, self-report studies among the included literature also limits causal interpretation. Finally, the overrepresentation of student populations, especially those from health and medical fields, reduces the generalizability of findings to broader populations.

### *Implications for Future Research*

To strengthen the field's understanding of nomophobia and stress, future research should include greater methodological and population diversity. Studies beyond student populations, especially among working adults, adolescents and older age groups are needed to establish generalizability.

There is a high need for longitudinal, qualitative and intervention based studies to move beyond correlation and understand causality, lived experience, and effective solutions. Further, the development of alternative or updated measurement tools could address limitations in capturing emerging forms of smartphone dependence. Lastly, improving access to diverse databases and full text articles will enhance the comprehensiveness and quality of future reviews.

## CONCLUSION

This review synthesizes findings from 35 empirical studies to highlight the global prevalence and psychological significance of nomophobia, particularly its consistent association with elevated stress levels. The findings reveal that nomophobia is not merely a behavioral habit but a complex psychological response influenced by emotional, social and technological factors. With most studies reporting moderate to severe levels of nomophobia across diverse populations especially among students and healthcare professionals, the phenomenon reflects broader concerns about digital dependency and mental wellbeing in the modern age.

While this review offers valuable insights, it also recognizes methodological constraints, including limited access to databases and reliance on title based search strategies. The consistency of findings across studies emphasized the significance of the relationship between nomophobia and stress, and the urgent need to address it through psychoeducation, awareness and preventive interventions.

Future research should explore underrepresented populations, adopt mixed-method designs, and develop culturally sensitive tools to better understand the lived experiences of individuals affected by nomophobia. Overall, this review contributes to the growing discourse on digital mental health and call for the informed, multidisciplinary strategies to mitigate the psychological impacts of smartphone overdependence.

***Abbreviations used in this paper***

- NMPQ – Nomophobia Questionnaire
- SES – Socioeconomic Status
- DASS 21 – Depression Anxiety Stress Scales – 21 Items
- PSS – Perceived Stress Scale
- EPGE-1 – Escala de Percepción Global de Estrés - 1 (Spanish: Global Perception of Stress Scale - 1)
- SSRS – Social Support Rating Scale
- UCLA – University of California, Los Angeles Loneliness Scale
- MSPSS – Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support
- RSES – Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale
- IDATE – Inventário de Ansiedade Traço-Estado
  FoMO – Fear of Missing Out
- PTSD – Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- API- Academic Performance Index
- IOFPS - Intensity of Playing Online Games Scale
- WSS- work stress scale
- SMA- Social Media Addiction
- PHQ- Perceived Health Questionnaire
- SIAS- Social Interaction Anxiety Scale
- FCV-19S - The Fear of COVID-19 Scale and Chinese PTSD Checklist

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