

Phantom Phone Vibrations, Nomophobia, and Behavioural Changes among Working-Class Adults

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ABSTRACT

Background: With increasing smartphone integration into professional environments, working class adults are experiencing technology related behavioral changes such as Phantom Phone Vibrations (PPV) and Nomophobia. These behaviors have been linked to workplace stress, reduced productivity, burnout, and emotional dysregulation. Despite rising concern, consolidated synthesis of studies, examining Phantom Phone Vibration, Nomophobia, and behavioral outcomes in working class has been limited. **Aim:** This synthetic review synthesis, empirical evidence on Phantom phone vibrations, nomophobia, and associated behavioral changes among working class adults over the past decade. **Methods:** Following PRISMA guidelines, and extensive search across Scopus, PubMed, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar identified studies published between 2013 to 2024. 17 studies met the inclusion criteria, comprising 3 Phantom phone vibration focused studies and 14 Nomophobia studies involving working professionals across healthcare, high-tech corporate, and service sectors. Data were analyzed, descriptively and thematically. **Results:** Across the limited available literature, Phantom phone vibration was found to be highly prevalent among medical interns, hospital, staff, and high-tech employees, and was associated with elevated stress, burnout, and increased perceived workload. Nomophobia among adults consistently arranged from moderate to severe, predicting anxiety, compulsive phone checking, sleep disturbance, and reduced occupational efficiency. Despite these findings, the review reveals a significant scarcity of research, with very few studies directly focusing on working class adults and almost no longitudo or intervention based work.

Keywords: *Phantom Phone Vibrations, Nomophobia, Technology-induced anxiety, Smartphone dependence, Working-class adults, Occupational burnout, Workplace productivity, Systematic review*

The widespread adoption of smartphones worldwide has revolutionised communication, work habits, and everyday behaviours. These devices of multiple roles in connectivity task, entertainment, and social interaction, fostering deep psychological and emotional bond among users (Billieux, 2021; Panova & Carbonell, 2018). For working class adults, who frequently depend on smart phones for job coordination,

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scheduling, and professional; exchanges, this reliance has sparked novel psychological phenomena and shifts in conduct that has guarded A prevalent issue in Phantom phone vibration (PPV), characterised by sensing device, alerts, or vibration that do not exist (Duke & Montag, 2017; Rogers et al., 2014). This occurs due to perceptual errors from elevated anticipation or constant scanning for phone signals. Evidence shows higher Phantom Phone Vibration rates among heavy users, those frequently monitoring, alerts, and people with intense device attachment (Lin et al., 2019; Deb, 2020). Survey's reveal 60 to 90% lifetime prevalence among adults, often recurring, weekly or more (Rogers et al., 2014; Tanis et al., 2015). Beyond being overlooked as harmless, PPV, correlates with mental tension, focus, description, and more frequent device checks (Subba et al., 2013).

Closely tied is nomophobia, marked by unease, worry, or panic from being unable to access one phone (King et al., 2014; Yildirim & Correia, 2015). It involves effective, mental, and action-oriented science, like separation distress, obsessive verification, and connectivity loss, fear. Findings indicate elevated Nomophobia in younger and midlife workers versus senior, driven by digital engagement, always on job demands, and application-based workflows (Gezgin et al., 2018; Tavalacci et al., 2021). Nomophobia links to weaker impulse control, amplified tension, and disruptive usage (Arpaci et al., 2017; Ivanova et al., 2020).

Smart phone drive, behavioural shifts in workers, encompass, habitual overuse, notification, obsession, on-job interruptions, delayed rest, mood, instability, and output declines (Elhai et al., 2017; Samaha & Hawi, 2016). Overuse during shifts ties to mental fatigue, divided attention, lower involvement, and subpar results (Chen et al., 2016; Xie et al., 2018). Such patterns interplay with PPV and nomophobia, forming loops of watchfulness, worry, and routine checking (Horwood & Anglim, 2019).

Working class adults, married, focal exam examination, here, as smart phone needs for career links, remote/hybrid setup, and digital tools, enforce non-stop access (Derks et al., 2015; Schlachter et al., 2018). This erodes work, life divides, boosting notification sensitivity, quick response-mandate, and device reliance (Stothart et al., 2015). These factors amplify, PPV, nomophobia, and conduct alterations, risking staff health, stability, and efficacy (Yildirim & Correia, 2015; Elhai et al., 2017). While investigations into these elements have grown lately, they often examine them in isolation. Integrated analysis of PPV, Nomophobia, and behavioural shifts in working adults (20-45 years) remain scarce, lacking a unified synthesis of their joint mental and job effects (King et al., 2014; Ivanova et al., 2020).

Thus, this is systemic review synthesises data on PPV, nomophobia, and phone behavioural shifts in working adult aged 20-45. It explores occurrence, links, and conduct effects to illuminate smartphone impacts on psyche and work dynamics (Derks et al., 2015; Billieux, 2012).

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of the present systematic reviews to address the evidence, shortage of research, exploring phantom phone vibration, nomophobia, and smartphone related behavioural changes, specifically among working class adults, particularly within the Indian context. Although these phenomena have been widely examined in student populations and general community samples, occupational segment remains significantly understood despite its high reliance on smart phones for professional communication and daily work activities.

Therefore, this review aims to consolidate the limited existing evidence, identify key psychological, and behavioural patterns related to smartphone use among working adults, and highlight the research gap concerning Indian working population. By doing so, the study seeks to provide a clearer foundation for future empirical work and potential intervention tailored to working individuals.

METHODS

Search Strategy

A systematic search was conducted in PubMed, Scopus, Google Scholar, PsychINFO and Web of Science to identify P reviewed empirical studies published between 2010 and 2024. Search terms combined keywords related to the two target variables and the working adult population:

- “Phantom phone vibrations” OR “phantom vibration syndrome” OR “Phantom ringing”
- “Nomophobia” OR “mobile phone separation anxiety”
- “Working adults” OR “employees” OR “workplace” OR “occupational”

Boolean combinations included:

(“phantom vibration syndrome” AND “working adults”),

(“nomophobia” AND “employees”),

(“smartphone anxiety” AND “workplace”),

And related terms

Eligibility Criteria

Studies were included if they met the following criteria:

1. Empirical research (cross-sectional, cohort, survey based and experimental).
2. Examined either Phantom Phone Vibration (PPV) or Nomophobia as a primary psychological or behavioural variable.
3. Included working adults (any employed population; in terms of healthcare workers, corporate employees, technical staff, etc).
4. Age criteria 18 to 60 years to capture all working age samples.
5. Reported psychological, behavioural or occupational outcomes related to smart phone use.
6. Full text available, peer reviewed.
7. Publication year between 2010 to 2024.

Exclusion Criteria

1. Student only or adolescent only samples.
2. Studies without working participants.
3. Review papers, meta-analysis, case, reports, dissertations.
4. Studies lacking clear smart phone related psychological variables.
5. Paper is not available in full text or not be reviewed.

Study Selection Process

The database search yield 3,482 records, which were imported into Zotero. After duplicate removal, 2,719, records remained for title and abstract screening. Of these, 2,581 articles were excluded as they featured non-working populations, focused on unrelated smartphone behaviours, lack empirical data, or did not report PPV or Nomophobia as primary variables. A total of 138 full text articles were assessed for eligibility. Of these, 121 articles were excluded for the following reasons:

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- Non-working population (n = 62)
- No direct assessment of PPV or nomophobia (n = 31)
- Mixed or clinical samples, not meeting criteria (n = 12)
- No behavioural or psychological outcomes (n = 13)
- Publications outside the review window/in accessible full texts (n= 3)

Following this rigorous screening process, 17 studies met all inclusion criteria and were retained for narrative synthesis. These comprised 3 PPV studies and 14 Nomophobia studies, all conducted with working adult samples across various countries and occupational groups.

Data Collection

Data collection was carried out after the completion of the eligibility screening process. All full text articles that met the inclusion criteria were revised, and relevant information regarding the study purpose variables examine sample details, and key findings was recorded. The extraction process was conducted independently by the researcher, with the supervising guide, providing oversight and clarifying methodological decisions when required. Any uncertainties that arose during the extraction process were resolved through consultation with the guide. The final data set consisted of 17 studies, including 3 on Phantom vibrations and 14 on nomophobia, which were used for narrative synthesis.

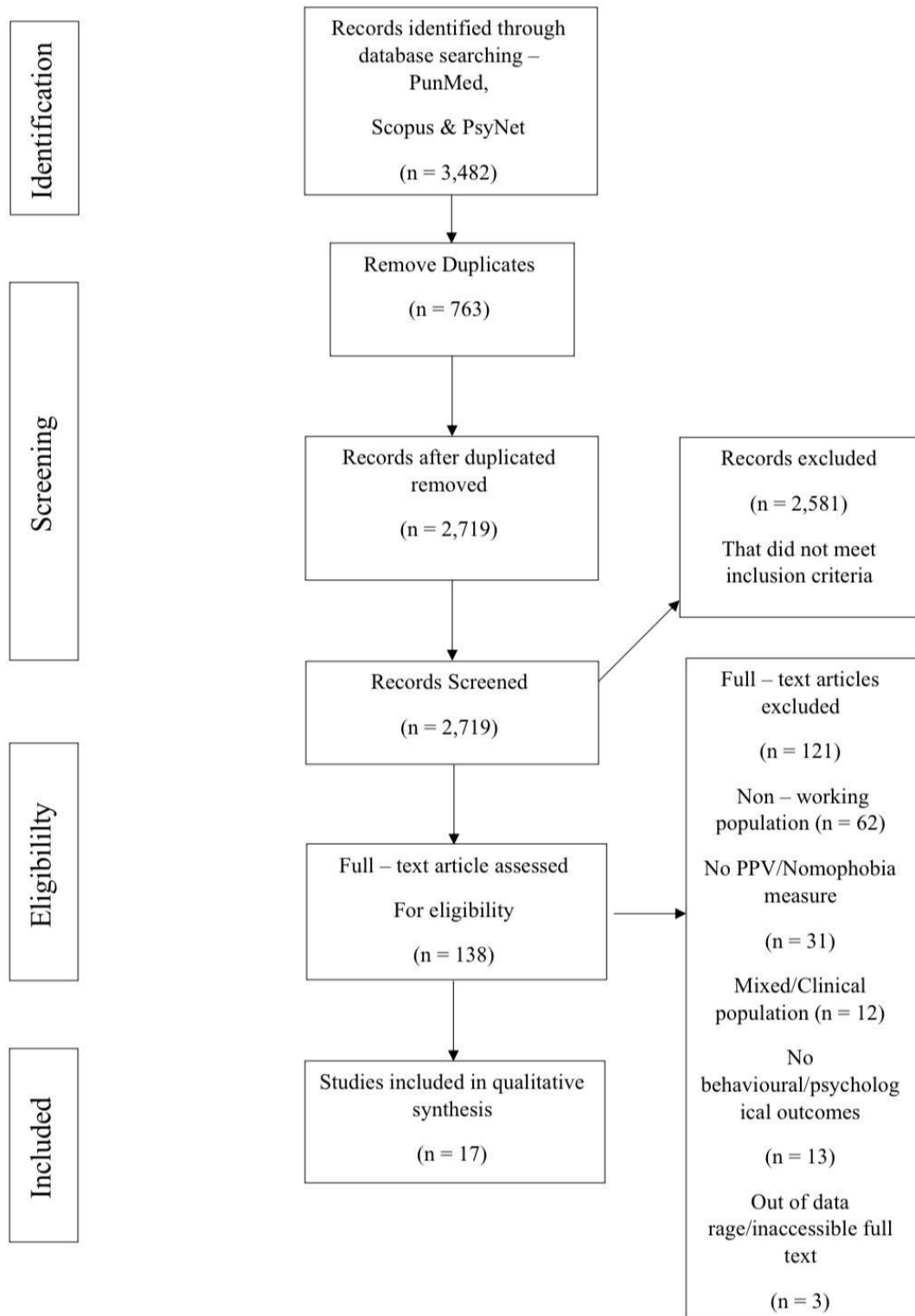
Quality Assessment

Each included study was evaluated using criteria for cross-sectional and workspace psychological research. Assessment domains included:

- Clarity of aims and hypotheses
- Sampling adequacy and relevance to working populations
- Validity and reliability of measurement tools
- Statistical transparency
- Identification and control of confounding variables
- Ethical approval and reporting

All 17 studies met minimum quality thresholds and were included in the final synthesis.

PRISMA MODEL



RESULTS

The narrative synthesis is organised around two themes: (a) Phantom phone vibrations (PPV) among working adults, and (b) Nomophobia among employed population. A total of

17 empirical studies made the inclusion criteria, comprising 3 PPV studies and 14 nomophobia studies conducted across varied occupational contexts.

1. Phantom Phone Vibrations Among Working Adults

Only three studies assessing PPV in employed, adult samples were identified, reflecting the limited scope of research and occupational contexts. Lin et al., (2013) found that medical interns in Taiwan, experienced a substantial increase in PPV and Phantom ringing during clinical rotation, with PPV strongly associated with stress, fatigue, extended work hours, and sleep disruption. Similarly, Chen et al., (2014) observed that PPV among high-tech company employees was significantly linked to occupational burnout, including personal and job fatigue, indicating that PPV may serve as a marker of work-related strain. In the Indian context, Mangot et al., (2018) reported high prevalence rates of Phantom vibrations and ringing among medical interns, with PPV significantly associated with perceived stress and high levels of device engagement.

These findings echo previous non-occupational PPV research, which reported links with anxiety, hyper-vigilance, and frequent device use (Rothberg et al., 2010; Drouin et al., 2012), suggesting that PPV may emerge under conditions of heightened cognitive load and continuous connectivity. However, the extremely small number of occupational PPV studies highlights a considerable gap, particularly for general working populations, outside healthcare and technology sectors.

2. Nomophobia Among Working Adults

A total of 14 studies examined nomophobia in workplace settings, making it a more widely research construct compared to PPV. Across studies, moderate to high levels of Nomophobia are consistently found among employees in diverse occupation, including nursing (Yang et al., 2024), corporate sectors (Chatterjee et al., 2020), office settings (Davey & Davey, 2014), seafaring (Aladag & Altinpinar, 2023), service industries (Contreras-Pinochet et al., 2023), and mixed working-age adult samples (Tavolacci et al., 2021; Jahrami et al., 2021).

Nomophobia was significantly associated with stress, sleep disturbances, impaired concentration and lower workplace interruptions. Tavolacci et al., (2021) demonstrated that Nomophobia, predicted higher stress, and lower well-being among French working adults. Jahrami et al., (2021) reported that elevated nomophobia levels contributed to insomnia symptoms, suggesting that constant connectivity, expectations may sleep quality and daytime functioning.

In Indian samples, Chatterjee et al., (2020) and Davey & Davey (2014) found that nomophobia increased compulsive checking, reduced productivity and created distractions during work tasks. Bai et al., (2024) reported that organisational climate factors such as ethical environment and commitment, reduced Nomophobic tendencies in employees, while Irfan et al., (2024) showed that Nomophobia negatively affected performance, moderated by behavioural regulation.

These findings aligned with earlier research linking smartphone over use to stress, cognitive overload, and attentional difficulties (Demirci et al., 2015; Gezgin, 2019), suggesting that nomophobia may operate as workplace, relevant psychological stressor.

3. Summary of Findings

The PPV studies consistently indicate that Phantom sensations are heightened in high demand, occupational roles where stress, duty hours, and device dependency are elevated. In contrast, nomophobia studies demonstrate broad prevalence, industries, and stronger associations with psychological strain, behavioural dysregulation, sleep problems, and reduced work performance.

Importantly, none of the included studies assessed both PPV and nomophobia together in working adults, indicating a clear and meaningful research gap.

	Author(s), Year	Country	Population	Variable	Sample (Working Adults)	Design	Key Findings
PPV (Phantom Phone Vibrations) – 3 studies							
1	Lin et al., 2013	Taiwan	Medical interns (n=74)	PPV / Phantom Ringing	Medical interns (employed trainees)	Longitudinal	PPV increased during internship; associated with workload, stress, fatigue
2	Chen et al., 2014	Taiwan	High-tech employees (n=384)	PPV	High-tech company employees	Cross-sectional	PPV predicted by burnout (personal & job fatigue); women showed more PRS
3	Mangot et al., 2018	India	Hospital staff (n=169)	PPV / PRS	Indian medical interns	Cross-sectional	High prevalence; positively associated with perceived stress and high phone use
Nomophobia (Working Adults) – 14 studies							
4	Tavolacci et al., 2021	France	Medical interns/doctors	Nomophobia	General working-age adults	Cross-sectional	Nomophobia associated with stress, anxiety, reduced well-being

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	Author(s), Year	Country	Population	Variable	Sample (Working Adults)	Design	Key Findings
5	Demirci et al., 2016	Turkey	Employees (n=477, IT/banking/teaching)	Smartphone addiction (nomophobia-linked)	Adult employees (mixed occupations)	Cross-sectional	High smartphone dependence linked with poor sleep & anxiety
6	Jahrami et al., 2021	Bahrain	Workers (36 studies, n=15,009)	Nomophobia	Working adults	Cross-sectional	Severe nomophobia predicted insomnia & emotional tension
7	Chatterjee et al., 2020	India	Healthcare workers	Nomophobia	Corporate employees (IT/corporate)	Cross-sectional	Nomophobia caused productivity loss, compulsive checking
8	Davey & Davey, 2014	India	Adult office workers	Nomophobia / mobile dependence	Office workers	Cross-sectional	Phone dependence lowered work quality & increased distraction
9	Chóliz, 2012	Spain	Adult workers including employees in services	Mobile dependence (nomophobia precursor)	Adult workers	Cross-sectional	Dependence linked to emotional dysregulation & impaired concentration
10	King et al., 2014	Brazil	Adults with panic disorder and controls, some employed	Nomophobia (clinical description)	Working-age adults	Clinical/cross-sectional	Identified behavioural & emotional symptoms of nomophobia
11	Bhattacharya et al., 2019	India	Employed adults including community workers	Nomophobia	Indian employed adults (community workers included)	Survey	Moderate-high nomophobia; associated with anxiety & negative affect
12	Léon-Mejía et al., 2021	Spain	Adult users including workers	NMP-Q validation	Adult workers included	Psychometric	Validated NMP-Q for adults; nomophobia related to stress levels
13	Contreras-Pinochet et al., 2023	Latin America	Adults in multiple sectors	Digital dependence / nomophobia	Working adults (mixed sectors)	Cross-sectional	Nomophobia correlated with depression, stress, poor

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	Author(s), Year	Country	Population	Variable	Sample (Working Adults)	Design	Key Findings
							mental health
14	Aladag & Altinpinar, 2023	Turkey	Seafarers n≈workforce sample	Nomophobia	Seafarers (occupational group)	Cross-sectional	Nomophobia associated with isolation, tension & poor sleep
15	Yang et al., 2024	China	Nurses / clinical staff	Nomophobic behaviours	Nurses (clinical employees)	Cross-sectional	Nomophobia reduced clinical decision-making quality
16	Bai et al., 2024	Multi-country	Organizational employees from several nations	Organizational commitment & nomophobia	Organizational employees	Cross-sectional	Strong ethical climate lowered nomophobia at workplace
17	Irfan et al., 2024	Pakistan	Adult workplace sample	Nomophobia & performance	Adult workplace sample	Experimental	Nomophobia reduced performance; behavioural regulation moderated effect

DISCUSSION

This systematic review synthesised existing empirical research on phantom phone vibrations, and nomophobia among working adults aged between 18-60 years. A total of 17 studies met the inclusion criteria, including 3 examining phantom phone vibration and 14 focusing on Nomophobia with diverse occupational groups. Overall, the findings demonstrate that both Phantom Phone Vibration and Nomophobia are relevant psychological experiences among contemporary employees, though the extent and nature of current evidence differ considerably across the two constructs.

Summary and Interpretation of PPV Findings

The results indicate that Phantom Phone Vibration remains an under-research phenomenon in occupational settings, with only three studies identified - 2 from Taiwan and 1 from India. Nevertheless, the studies consistently report high prevalence rates, particularly in professions marked by heavy workload, prolonged device exposure, and inconsistent sleep schedules. For example, Lin et al., (2013) documented a significant increase in Phantom phone vibration and Phantom ringing among medical intern during demanding clinical rotation, the interaction between occupational stress and perceptual disturbances. Chen et al. (2014) further found that Phantom Phone Vibration was significantly associated with personal fatigue, job fatigue, and burnout among employees in high technology sectors, suggesting that Phantom phone vibration may function as a potential behavioural indicator of work-related strain.

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The Indian study by Mangot et al., (2018) similarly showed high PPV prevalence among medical interns, aligning with international findings that Phantom phone vibration frequently co-occurs with stress, sleep disturbance, and excessive revising engagement. These results echo earlier general population research linking Phantom phone vibration with hyper-vigilance and anxiety, triggered by habitual phone checking (Rothberg et al., 2010; Droui et al., 2012). Taken together, the evidence suggests that Phantom phone vibration is issued by combination of occupational stress, cognitive load and continuous connectivity expectations.

Despite these consistent patterns, the limited number of Phantom phone vibration studies highlights a major evidence gap. None of the identified studies examine Phantom phone vibration across employee groups, such as administrative staff, surface workers, retail employees, or corporate sectors. Moreover, no study evaluated Phantom phone vibration alongside Nomophobia within the same working sample. This lack of integrated research restricts the understanding of how perceptual disturbances might interact with behavioural smartphone dependence in workplace contexts.

Summary and Interpretation of Nomophobia Findings

In contrast to Phantom phone vibration, nomophobia has been substantially more examined within working population, with 14 studies meeting inclusion criteria. The findings consistently indicate that nomophobia is prevalent in modern workplace and strongly associated with the range of psychological, behavioural, and functional outcomes.

Across studies, employees with higher nomophobia scores displayed, increased stress, anxiety, sleep disturbances, impaired concentration, and diminished well-being (Tavolacci et al., 2021; Contreras – Pinochet et al., 2023). Jahrami et al., (2021) highlighted that nomophobia is associated with insomnia symptoms, pointing to potential descriptions in circadian regulation due to persistent connectivity demands. Several studies among healthcare professionals, particularly nurses indicated that nomophobia, impaired clinical decision-making and situation awareness (Yang et al., 2024; Lupo et al., 2020), which has critical implications for patient safety and professional competence.

Evidence from South Asian context further emphasises the occupational impact of nomophobia. Davey and Davey (2014) reported that Indian office workers experienced significant work interruptions and decreased efficiency due to frequent checking behaviours. Similarly, Chatterjee et al., (2020) found that nomophobia among Indian corporate employees was linked with productivity loss, distraction, and compulsive phone use. Studies in Pakistan and multi country organisational samples confirm that nomophobia negatively affects job performance, although the presence of strong organisational commitment or ethical climate may mitigate its impact (Bai et al., 2024; Irfan et al., 2024).

Together, these findings suggest that Nomophobia functions as a digital age workplace influencing emotional states, cognitive functioning and job effectiveness.

Theoretical Interpretations

The combined findings can be understood through several theoretical perspectives. The Cognitive Load Theory suggests that excessive smartphone dependence increases cognitive demand, thereby elevating stress and reducing attention capacity, consistent with the productivity impairment reported in nomophobia studies (Sweller, 2011; Demirci et al., 2015). The hypervigilance model also aligns with Phantom Phone Vibration research,

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positing that individuals may heighten attention sensitivity to smartphone related cues may interpret internal bodily sensation as vibrations (Rothberg et al.,2010).

The stress appraisal coping framework further explains how constant connectivity might act as a chronic stressor. High work pressure, unpredictable communication demands, and after hours expectations, faster psychological tension, making employees more acceptable to Nomophobia and Phantom phone vibration. The findings collectively support the notion that were placed digital behaviours are shaped by both individual factors (anxiety, dependence, sleep) and environmental factors (workload, organisational norms, role expectations).

Relevance to Contemporary Workplace Functioning

The reviewed studies highlight several implications for organisational settings. First, both Phantom Phone Vibration and Nomophobia appear to under leading to interruptions and reduced task essential. Second, the association between Nomophobia and sleep problems may directly affect job performance through fatigue and reduced cognitive clarity. Third, the presence of Phantom Phone Vibration and increase Nomophobic behaviour among workers in high stress occupations, such as healthcare, IT, and corporate environment suggests that smartphones may act as amplifiers of existing occupational strain.

Furthermore, organisational climate emerged as a significant factor. Supportive environment and ethical climate were found to reduce Nomophobic tendencies (Bai et al., 2024), suggesting that well defined communication boundaries, and healthier digital norms could mitigate adverse outcomes.

Gaps in Indian Research

A striking finding in the limited number of Indian studies, despite India being one of the world's largest smartphone markets. Only a small subset of studies examined Nomophobia in Indian working adults, and no Indian study investigated Phantom Phone Vibration in general occupational samples outside medical interns. This gap the need for robust India specific research, exploring how cultural expectations, workplace digital norms, and high smartphone penetration shape employee behaviour and mental well-being.

Need for Integrated Research

An important observation from this review is the complete lack of studies, examining Phantom Phone Vibration and Nomophobia together within the same working population. Given that both phenomena from smart phone engagement and sensitivity integrated research may help identify shared mechanisms and intervention pathways.

Future studies should assess:

- Whether Nomophobia predicts Phantom Phone Vibration,
- Whether Phantom Phone Vibration contributes to anxiety or burn out,
- How digital norms influence both construct simultaneous

Such research would significantly advance theoretical understanding and practical intervention strategies.

Limitations

This systematic review subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged while into the findings. First, although comprehensive search strategy was employed, the review included only 17 studies that specifically examine Phantom phone vibration or Nomophobia among working adults. The small number of Phantom phone vibration studies, in particular,

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limits the generalisability of conclusions regarding perceptual disturbances in occupational context. The evidence base for Phantom phone vibration remains almost entirely confined to medical and high-technology professions, with an absence of studies examining Phantom phone vibration among broad sectors, such as retail, education, hospitality, or administrative work.

Second, the majority of included studies utilised, cross-sectional designs, which restrict ability to draw casual influences. Once several studies demonstrated significant associations between Nomophobia and variables, such as stress, sleep disturbance and productivity, it remains with Nomophobia contributes to these outcomes or further individuals, already experiencing psychological strain are more prone to smartphone independence.

Third, publication bias may be present, as studies reporting, significant or negative effects of smart fun independence are more likely to be published compared to studies neutral findings. Additionally, restricting the search to English language, pure review publications may have excluded relevant studies published in other languages or literature sources, potentially under presenting findings from non-western regions.

Fourth, although the review focused on working adults aged 18 to 60, several included studies did not provide detailed stratification or occupation specific analysis, which limits the precision of subgroup interpretation. Since workless Digital behaviour is influenced by factors such as your role workload, communication, expectations and technological demands, future studies should examine occupational differences more systematically.

Despite these limitations, the review provides a comprehensive synthesis of existing evidence on Phantom Phone Vibration and Nomophobia among adults and highlights gaps that feature research must address.

CONCLUSION

This systematic review, examines the available empirical research on Phantom phone vibrations and nomophobia among working adults, highlighting smartphone related perceptual and behavioural disturbances intercept with occupational function. The findings indicate that while Phantom phone vibration is considerably under investigated, existing research consistently links it to stress, have work load fatigue, irregular sleep patterns, and high demand professional roles. In contrast, nomophobia has received wider empirical attention with strong evidence, demonstrating its associations with anxiety, sleep disturbances, productivity loss, impaired concentration, and workplace interruptions across diverse employment sectors.

Together, the findings suggest that smartphone related psychological experiences can meaningfully influence employees well-being, and performance, particularly within work environment, characterised by continuous connectivity expectations and higher digital dependence. However, the current literature is marked by important gaps. Notably, no study as examined Phantom Phone Vibration and Nomophobia concurrently within the same occupational sample, and research in the Indian working population remains Limited, despite the countries rapidly expanding digital workforce.

The review underscores the need for future studies, employing robust, methodological, longitudinal research designs, and include occupational samples to deep and understanding of how these phenomena develop and influence workplace behaviour. Integrated Phantom

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Phone Vibration and Nomophobia unified research framework may also help identify mechanisms and inform the development of organisational guidelines aimed at promoting healthy digital labs. Addressing these gaps is essential for developing effort and space strategies that support employment, health, attention and productivity, and faster sustainable Digital practises in modern workplaces.

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Conflict of Interest

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