

Indian Journal of Psychological Science

Internationally

Indexed, Refereed and Peer Reviewed

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UGC Approved: Emerging Sources Citation Index:

<https://mjl.clarivate.com:/search-results?issn=0976-9218>

I J P S

DOI: <https://doi-ds.org/doi/10.2023-64785556/IJPS/NAPS>

The official organ of:



National Association of Psychological Science (Regd.)

www.napsindia.org Email: managingeditorijps@gmail.com, Phone: 9417882789

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When Fear Fuels Frenzy: Nomophobia's Alarming Link to Mania

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Abstract

Nomophobia has developed as a relevant psychological concern in the digital age, as smartphones have become extensions of ourselves. The impact of excessive smartphone usage on mental health continues to come under examination as technology pervades every area of our lives. Mania is a unique difficulty among mental health conditions. Manic cases, characterised by increased energy, impulsivity, and a decreased need for sleep, substantially influence an individual's everyday functioning. Understanding the connection between nomophobia and mania is critical for recognising early warning symptoms and devising effective therapies. This study focused on the relationship between nomophobia and mania in a group of 390 young adults with a mean age of 26 ± 3.32 years. The study explores the psychological consequences of nomophobia, concentrating on its relationship with manic tendencies. This study's findings demonstrated a substantial positive correlation between nomophobia and mania, indicating that people with greater levels of nomophobia have more intense manic symptoms. These findings offer insight into the complex interplay between digital reliance and emotional states, emphasising the need for more study to understand the underlying processes. Understanding this link is critical in the context of today's digital era, providing significant insights for mental health practitioners and policymakers attempting to address the issues brought by excessive smartphone usage and its consequences for psychological well-being.

Keywords: *Nomophobia, Mania, Smartphone Users*

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INTRODUCTION

New phobias are emerging that are related to modern-day society and the novel obstacles that are constantly faced in daily life, such as the so-called technophobias, which represent a sense of discomfort towards technologies, particularly emerging and advanced ones, cyberphobia, computer-phobia and nomophobia (Brosnan, 2002; Bragazzi & Del Puente, 2014). People's lives altered dramatically as technology advanced. With the introduction of smartphones, internet access is now available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Nomophobia is an abbreviation for 'No Mobile Phone Phobia' or the fear of missing out. Nomophobia indicates a threat to the majority of the people. Adolescents with

Nomophobia causes anxiety concerns, impulsivity, sleep disorders and irritability, and it affects their attention, obsessions, and compulsions, as well as their eating habits and physical activity (Radha & Kewalramani, 2023). In other words, Nomophobia is a psychological ailment in which people are afraid of being disconnected from mobile phone connectivity (In, 2016). When compared to different age groups, young adults appear to be more prone to nomophobia (Ozdemir, Cakir, & Hussain, 2018; Daei, Ashrafi-Rizi, & Soleymani, 2019) and have the potential to negatively influence our lives by producing addiction, discomfort, anxiety, or reliance

DOI: <https://doi-ds.org/doi/10.2023-64785556/IJPS/NAPS>

(Adnan & Gezgin, 2016). Adults who use more technology and media, particularly social media, are more likely to exhibit clinical signs of mental problems (Rosen, Whaling, Rab, Carrier & Cheever, 2013).

Both major depressive disorder and bipolar disorder are frequent mental illnesses for which smartphone application development has grown significantly in the previous two years (Torous & Powell, 2015). Mania, a defining sign of bipolar disease, sends people into a frenzy of heightened emotions and activities. Individuals experiencing manic episodes may be overwhelmed by racing thoughts and an irrepressible rush of energy, frequently accompanied by a decreased desire for sleep. In this mood, their self-esteem rises, and they may act rashly, engaging in dangerous behaviour they would normally shun. This changed state of mind can be especially problematic when combined with the contemporary ailment known as nomophobia. Nomophobia expresses the gripping fear and uneasiness felt when one is without their mobile or smartphone device. The dread of detachment, fear, and misery that mania causes can be amplified in those who are prone to nomophobia. The link resides in the impulsive behaviour associated with manic episodes, in which individuals may crave continual stimulation and spend excessive time on their phones. Excessive phone use can exacerbate separation anxiety from the gadget, producing a vicious cycle that exacerbates both illnesses. This complicated interaction provides light on the delicate interplay between psychological states and the worries created by our contemporary technology-driven society, emphasising the significance of recognising and resolving these complex challenges in mental health treatment.

Mania is an abnormally high mood disturbance that affects roughly 1% of the general population and is generally associated with spells of sadness that lead to bipolar disorder or manic-depressive condition, a medical requirement having significant consequences for individual and interpersonal functioning, with deficits that can be severe and long-lasting, even after recovery from therapy (Daly, 1997).

It is distinguished by increased talkativeness, rapid speech, decreased need for sleep, racing thoughts, distractibility, increased goal-directed activity, and psychomotor agitation. Other characteristics of mania include a heightened or wide-ranging mood, mood lability, impulsiveness, irritation, and grandiosity (Dailey & Saadabadi, 2018; Badcock, 2023). Excessive smartphone usage, especially in the setting of social media and continuous alerts, has been linked to manic behaviour in certain people. The ongoing desire for validation and comparison may feed a frantic loop of checking alerts, sharing updates, and seeking fast pleasure. This constant stimulation and the need to maintain an online identity can lead to increased anxiety, impulsivity, and a sense of urgency, similar to manic symptoms. Furthermore, cellphones' quick access to endless information and entertainment might interrupt sleep patterns, worsening manic episodes. To sustain mental well-being in the digital era, individuals must find a balance between utilising the benefits of smartphones and monitoring their usage wisely.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives: The present article examines the relationship between nomophobia and mania, emphasising the significance of tackling smartphone reliance in mental health research and therapeutic practice.

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Hence, the objectives of the were:

O1: To study the relationship between nomophobia and mania (activity level, grandiosity and irritability).

O2: To Predict mania (activity level, grandiosity and irritability) from nomophobia.

Hypotheses

H1: There would be a positive relationship between nomophobia and mania (home, health, social, emotional and educational).

H2: Nomophobia would significantly predict the mania (activity level, grandiosity and irritability).

Research Design

Correlational design was used to achieve the objectives of this study.

Sample

The study's sample comprised 390 young adult participants. The participants were selected using a convenient sample approach, which implies they were chosen based on availability and accessibility. The sample's mean age was 26, with a standard deviation of 3.32 (20-35 years). This sample represents a specific group of young adults and was the foundation for the research analysis and study results. The study requires participants to meet particular criteria: a) they must have owned smartphones or cell phones with internet connectivity for a minimum of six months, indicating a basic familiarity with digital technology, and b) they should not have been previously diagnosed with any disorder. By focusing on this demographic, the research aims to gather data from individuals who possess a standard level of technological experience and lack any underlying disorders that could potentially skew the results, thereby ensuring the study's reliability and accuracy.

Tools used:

Nomophobia Questionnaire (Yildirim & Correia, 2015)

A Nomophobia Questionnaire is a structured set of questions designed to assess an individual's level of nomophobia. The questionnaire aims to measure the extent to which a person is dependent on their mobile phone and experiences anxiety or distress when they are unable to use it. Typically, a Nomophobia Questionnaire includes a series of 20 statements or scenarios related to mobile phone usage, and respondents were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with these statements. The questions may cover topics such as feelings of anxiety when the phone is not accessible, the need to constantly check the phone, the fear of missing out on important information, and the impact of mobile phone use on social interactions and productivity.

Personality Assessment Inventory (Morey, 1991)

The Clinical Scale of Mania is a component of the Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI), which is a widely used psychological assessment tool designed to evaluate various aspects of an individual's personality and psychopathology, i.e., activity level, grandiosity and irritability. The PAI is commonly used by mental health professionals, including psychologists and psychiatrists, to aid in the diagnosis, treatment planning, and monitoring of mental health disorders. The Clinical Scale of Mania focuses explicitly on assessing manic symptoms in individuals. Mania is a mood disorder characterised by elevated, expansive, or irritable mood, increased energy, decreased need for sleep, inflated self-esteem, rapid speech, racing thoughts, and impulsive behaviour.

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Procedure

A group of young adults from Haryana State was chosen as the sample for the study. Once the study tools were determined, the research was conducted. The participants were informed about the study's objective and kept their responses confidential. A positive rapport was established. Each participant received a set of questionnaires, including a Nomophobia Questionnaire and a personality assessment inventory. The participants were appreciated for voluntarily participating and cooperating in the test administration.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Descriptive (mean, standard deviation and variance) and Pearson's correlational Statistical approaches were used to analyse the data, and the regression coefficient was

RESULTS

This study dives into the complex relationship between nomophobia and mania, uncovering the concerning link between the fear of being phoneless and heightened levels of mania. The aim of this study intended to shed light on the psychological complexities of nomophobia and its potential to worsen manic episodes by researching this junction, eventually bringing valuable insights to the disciplines of psychology, technology, and mental health. This study tries to uncover the intricate interactions between fear, technology, and mental well-being by thorough examination and analysis, offering a complete knowledge of the influence of nomophobia on manic tendencies.

Table 1.

Descriptive statistics summary for the total sample (N= 390).

	N	Mean ± SD	Variance
Nomophobia		80.06± 13.71	188.19
Mania	390	40.98± 3.84	14.79
MAN-A		13.98 ±2.05	4.23
MAN-G		13.58 ± 2.06	4.27
MAN-I		13.41± 2.21	4.90

In this study, a total of 390 young adult participants were included. The descriptive statistics provide insights into different variables related to nomophobia and mania. As measured by the Nomophobia Scale, Nomophobia had a mean score of 80.06 with a standard deviation of 13.71, indicating a

relatively wide spread of scores around the mean. The variance of 188.19 further underscores the variability in nomophobia scores within the sample. Dimensions related to mania were assessed. The mean scores for these variables viz. Mania, MAN-A, MAN-G, and MAN-I were 40.98, 13.98,

13.58 and 13.41, respectively. The standard deviations for Mania (3.84), MAN-A (2.05), MAN-G (2.06) and MAN-I (2.21) were relatively small, indicating less variability around the means compared to nomophobia (Table 1). These descriptive statistics reveal that while nomophobia scores showed

higher variability and a wider spread around the mean, mania-related scores were generally lower, with less variability among the participants. This suggests that nomophobia was a more pronounced and varied concern within the studied population.

Table 2.

Inter-correlation matrix between mania (activity level, grandiosity and irritability) and nomophobia.

	Nomophobia	MAN-A	MAN-G	MAN-I	Mania
Nomophobia	1				
MAN-A	.123* (p=.015)	1			
MAN-G	.154** (p=.002)	.093 (p=.066)	1		
MAN-I	.181** (p<.001)	.034 (p=.509)	.031 (p=.537)	1	
Mania	.253** (p<.001)	.605** (p<.001)	.605** (p<.001)	.610** (p<.001)	1

*Significance at .005; **Significance at .01 level

From Table 2, significant correlations were observed between nomophobia (the fear of being without a mobile phone or being unable to use it) and different dimensions of mania, as measured by activity level, grandiosity, and irritability. It provides valuable insights into the complex relationship between technology use and mental health. The results revealed a positive correlation coefficient of .123 (p = .015) between nomophobia and mania activity level, suggesting a weak but statistically significant relationship between these variables. The connection between nomophobia and mania-activity

level indicated that individuals who experience intense fear related to phone separation may be more prone to heightened levels of activity during manic episodes, potentially driven by the need to constantly engage with their mobile devices. Similarly, a slightly stronger positive correlation was found between nomophobia and mania grandiosity, with a correlation coefficient of .154 (p = .002). This points to a possible link between exaggerated self-importance and excessive phone reliance, hinting at how the fear of phone unavailability might exacerbate feelings of grandiosity during manic states.

In other words, it is represented by an exaggerated sense of superiority, significance, or uniqueness, also characterised by an overestimation of one's talents, position, expertise, or identity. Nomophobia also showed a moderate positive correlation with mania irritability, with a correlation coefficient of .181 ($p < .001$), implying that phone-related anxiety could contribute to increased irritability, a common symptom of mania, highlighting the role of technology-induced stressors in exacerbating emotional dysregulation. Moreover, when considering mania as an overall construct, the correlation with nomophobia was even

Table 3.

Simple regression analysis for predicting mania (activity level, grandiosity and irritability) from nomophobia.

		R ²	β	F	Sig.
Mania	MAN-A	.015	.123	5.973	.015
	MAN-G	.024	.154	9.484	.002
	MAN-I	.033	.181	13.133	.001
	MAN	.064	.253	26.538	.001

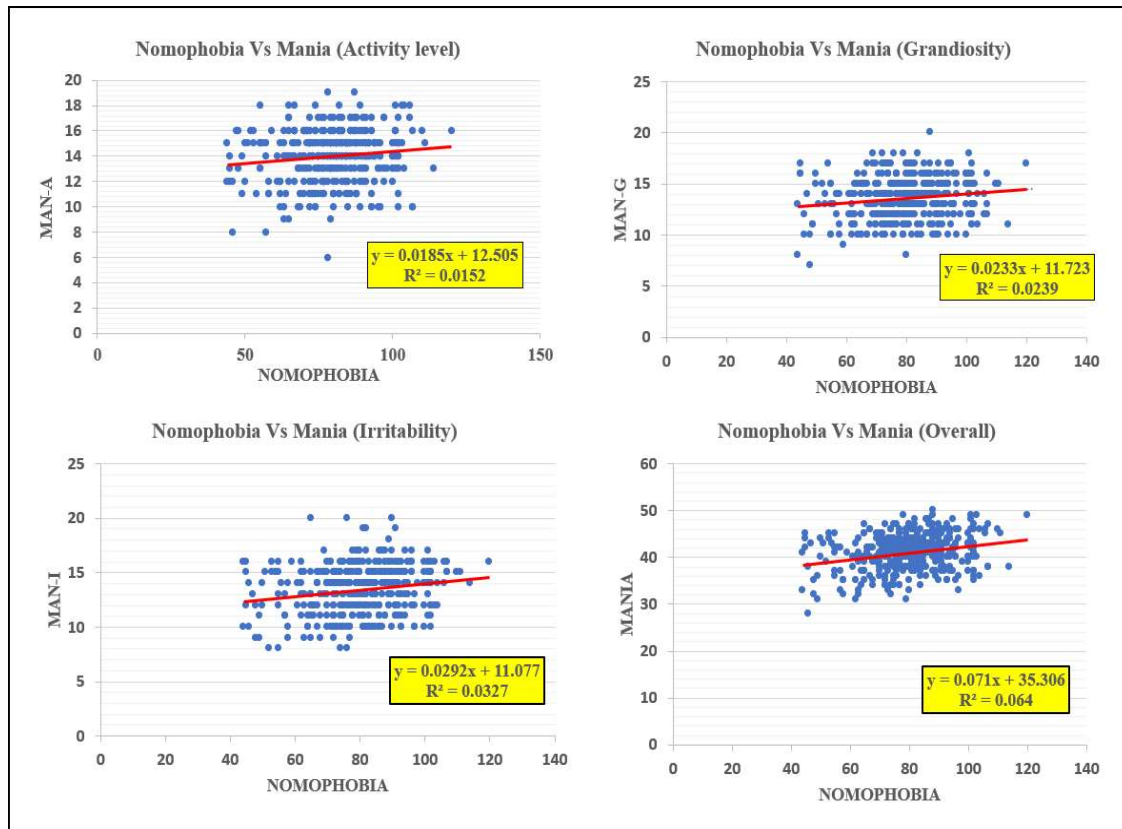
The regression *Table 3* demonstrates that nomophobia plays a crucial role in the development of manic symptoms, specifically in terms of activity level with 1.5 % of the variance ($\beta = .123$), grandiosity with 2.4 % of the variance ($\beta = .154$), and irritability with 3.3 % of the variance ($\beta = .181$). The data reveals a substantial and noteworthy correlation between nomophobia and mania, with nomophobia accounting for a significant

higher, with a coefficient of .253 ($p < .001$), shedding light on the nuanced ways in which mobile phone dependence can influence the manifestation and severity of manic symptoms in individuals grappling with mental health challenges. These findings suggest that individuals experiencing nomophobia are more likely to exhibit higher levels of manic symptoms, including increased activity, feelings of grandiosity, and irritability. The results emphasise the importance of understanding the relationship between nomophobia and manic tendencies, which could affect mental health interventions and treatments.

6.4 % ($\beta = .253$) of the variance observed in mania. This finding underscores the substantial impact of nomophobia on the manifestation of mania, indicating a positive relationship between the two variables. In summary, this study unequivocally establishes nomophobia as a significant positive predictor of mania, confirming the hypothesis to a considerable extent. A linear regression plot (*Figure 1*) provides valuable insights

Figure 1.

Regression plot for prediction of mania (activity level, grandiosity and irritability) from nomophobia.



into the relationship between two variables, specifically in this case, between nomophobia as the predictor variable and mania (activity level) as the criterion variable. The given regression equation, $y = 0.0185x + 12.505$, indicates these variables' linear relationship.

The coefficient 0.0185 suggests a positive but relatively small relationship between nomophobia and mania (activity level). According to this model, as the nomophobia score increases by one unit, the mania activity level is expected to increase by 0.0185 units. However, the R-square value of 0.015 indicates that only 1.52 % of the variance in mania levels can be explained by nomophobia scores. This means that despite being statistically significant, the linear

regression model explains only a tiny proportion of mania's activity level variability. Similarly, grandiosity ($R^2 = .0239$) and irritability ($R^2 = .0327$) showed a relatively small relationship.

DISCUSSION

Research studies in the past have consistently pointed towards nomophobia as a robust predictor of irritable behaviour, reinforcing the outcomes of the current research. These collective findings strongly support the idea that nomophobia significantly contributes to the emergence of manic symptoms, shedding light on the importance of addressing nomophobia in the context of mental health research and interventions. Individuals' degrees of nomophobia were shown to have a statistically significant inverse relationship

with their total 5-factor personality scale scores. According to the findings, when individuals' nomophobia levels rise, their 5-factor personality scale scores fall (Dalbudak, Yilmaz & Yigit, 2020). Nomophobia, according to Bragazzi and DelPuente (2014), is a condition experienced by the digital society that manifests as discomfort, anxiety, irritation, and distress when the person cannot access a mobile phone or computer. This fear of being unable to contact a mobile phone causes anxiety, stress, irritability, or pain. (Pavithara and colleagues, 2015). A study indicated that mobile phones are a barrier to physical activity, which may contribute to a sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy persons (Gumusgul, 2018). Yalcin, Demirel, Demirel and Colakoglu (2017), on the other hand, discovered a substantial relationship between participation in free time activities and smartphone addiction; students prefer to utilise cell-phones or smartphones as an efficient form of communication. Education and awareness campaigns on appropriate smartphone usage, digital detox practices, and mental health assistance are all necessary first steps. Furthermore, building technologies that foster thoughtful interaction and promote digital well-being can assist users in more healthily navigating the digital realm. Striking a balance between using cellphones for communication, business, and enjoyment while protecting one's mental and emotional well-being is critical in developing a long-term connection with these omnipresent gadgets in the expanding digital era (Radtke, Apel, Schenkel, Keller & von Lindern, 2022).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research paper sheds crucial light on the alarming relationship between nomophobia, the fear of being without a mobile phone, and manic behaviours. The findings presented here underscore the profound impact technology-induced anxieties can have on mental health,

leading to frenzied states of mania. As our society increasingly relies on digital devices, understanding the psychological repercussions of this dependency is imperative. The evidence presented in this study serves as a stark reminder of the importance of striking a balance between technological advancements and mental well-being. It calls for urgent attention from policymakers, mental health professionals, and society to address the rising tide of nomophobia and its potential to fuel manic episodes. Further research and comprehensive interventions are essential to mitigate the adverse effects of nomophobia, ensuring a healthier and more sustainable relationship between individuals and their digital devices.

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Note: The author having sole responsibility for the genuineness of the contents of this manuscript.

Conflict of Interest:

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

Author's contribution:

*review write-up, analyses and discussion ** finalization of the manuscript by extending expert support.

Received: 28th February, 2023; Revision Received: 24th April, 2023; Accepted: 12th June, 2023