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The Relationship between Nomophobia and Phubbing among IT Employees

Siva B * and Jaimathisa A

Department of Counselling Psychology, University of Madras, Chennai, India.

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Abstract

The interplay between nomophobia and phubbing is particularly relevant in the IT field due to the high dependence on mobile phones for work (Kuss et al., 2018). This study examined the relationship between nomophobia and phubbing among IT employees. In the present study, 200 participants working in different IT companies were selected using convenience sampling. The Nomophobia Questionnaire (Yildirim and Correia, 2015) and Phubbing scale (Karadağ et al., 2015) were used to collect the data. The results revealed that nomophobia was significantly and positively related to phubbing ($r = .487, p < .001$). This finding suggests that an increase in nomophobia was associated with an increase in phubbing among IT employees.

Keywords: Nomophobia; Phubbing; IT Employees; Relationship

1. Introduction

The widespread adoption of digital technologies and smartphones in professional settings has significantly altered the work environment, particularly in the Information Technology (IT) sector (Ayyagari et al., 2011). IT professionals, who rely heavily on these devices for communication and task management, often feel the pressure to stay continuously connected (Tarafdar et al., 2015). This constant engagement with digital tools can lead to various psychological and behavioral issues, raising concerns about the impact of technology-induced stress on employees' well-being (Salanova et al., 2013). The demanding nature of IT work, which requires real-time communication and swift responses, exacerbates the prevalence of issues like nomophobia and phubbing among these workers (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016).

Nomophobia, or the fear of being without a mobile phone, is becoming increasingly common as smartphones become central to both personal and professional lives (Yildirim, 2014). This term describes the anxiety experienced when individuals are separated from their smartphones, highlighting a broader worry about missing important communications, work updates, or social interactions (Bragazzi & Del Puente, 2014). IT employees, who depend on smartphones for work-related tasks, are especially vulnerable to nomophobia due to the constant pressure to be available (King et al., 2013). This fear can negatively impact their productivity, well-being, and overall job satisfaction (Fuglseth & Sørebo, 2014).

Phubbing can be described as an individual looking at his or her mobile phone during a conversation with other individuals, dealing with the mobile phone and escaping from interpersonal communication. (Karadağ et al., 2015). Initially noted in social contexts, phubbing has become problematic in professional environments as well (Roberts & David, 2017). Phubbing, the act of ignoring others in favor of focusing on a smartphone, has also emerged as a significant concern in workplaces (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016).

* Corresponding author: Siva B

In the IT sector, where multitasking and reliance on devices for communication are common, phubbing can disrupt work relationships and team dynamics. Research shows that when leaders or supervisors engage in phubbing, it can erode trust and engagement among team members, leading to decreased work performance and job dissatisfaction (Bracht et al., 2024). Moreover, frequent phubbing can contribute to workplace incivility, hinder collaboration, and negatively affect professional relationships, further impacting productivity (Hasan et al., 2024). The interplay between nomophobia and phubbing is particularly relevant in the IT field due to the high dependence on mobile phones for work (Kuss et al., 2018). Employees often find themselves torn between the fear of missing out on crucial communications and the tendency to prioritize mobile phone interactions over face-to-face conversations (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016).

As nomophobia and phubbing become more common among IT professionals, it is crucial to conduct thorough research on these issues. Exploring how these phenomena interact can guide the creation of strategies to encourage healthier digital habits in the workplace. Moreover, understanding their effects on employee well-being and productivity is key to developing a supportive work environment that balances technology use with effective communication practices. This study aims to assess the relationship between nomophobia and phubbing among IT employees.

2. Method

2.1. Sample

In the present study, 200 working employees from different IT companies were selected using convenience sampling. Their age ranges between 20-35 years (Mean age = 26.08).

2.2. Measures

The Nomophobia Questionnaire developed by Yildirim and Correia (2015), was used to measure nomophobia. The questionnaire consists of 20 questions (NMP-Q) with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) and the possible scores range from 20 to 140. The final reliability values of the questionnaire were estimated as 0.83 and 0.93 by Guttman's and Cronbach's alpha coefficients, respectively, showing excellent reliabilities and it has good construct validity (Yildirim & Correia., 2015)

Phubbing scale (PS) was developed by Karadağ et al. (2015). This scale consists of ten items and is scored on a 5-point Likert scale, graded from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Higher scores indicate high phubbing behavior. The results showed that the inventory exhibits a good composite reliability with a value of 0.858 (Karadağ et al., 2015).

2.3. Procedure

This study utilized the ex-post facto research design. The data were collected through online mode. The confidentiality and privacy of their answers were guaranteed to the participants. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. The quantitative data was analysed using IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 25 (SPSS). Descriptive statistics was used to describe the sample characteristics. Pearson's product moment correlation was used to determine the relationship between nomophobia and phubbing among IT employees.

3. Results

Table 1 Demographic details of the sample

S. No	Demographic details	Category	N	Percentage (%)
1	Sex	Male	128	64
		Female	72	36
2	Socio-economic status	Low	49	24.5
		Middle	117	58.5
		High	34	17

Table 1 shows the demographic data of the participants. 64% were male and 36% were female participants. It also shows that 24.5% were from low socio-economic status and 58.5% were from middle class and the rest 17% were from high socio-economic status.

Table 2 Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation result

S. No	Variable	N	Mean	SD	1	2
1	Nomophobia	200	86.35	19.15	-	-
2	Phubbing	200	27.69	6.35	.487***	-

Table 2 shows the mean, standard deviation and correlation result of Nomophobia and Phubbing. The group's average nomophobia and phubbing levels stand at 86.35 (SD = 19.15) and 27.69 (SD = 6.35). It was hypothesised that nomophobia would have significant positive relationship with Phubbing. The results revealed that nomophobia was significantly and positively related to phubbing ($r = .487$ $p < .001$). This finding suggests that an increase in nomophobia was associated with increase in phubbing among IT employees. Hence, hypothesis was accepted.

4. Discussion

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between nomophobia and phubbing among IT employees. The findings of this study reveal a significant positive correlation between nomophobia and phubbing among IT employees. It indicates that as nomophobia increases, so does the tendency to engage in phubbing behaviors. This suggests that employees who experience heightened anxiety about being without their smartphones are more likely to ignore their colleagues in favor of their devices, thereby reinforcing the hypothesis that nomophobia is linked to phubbing. The findings are in line with earlier studies (Maia & Sousa, 2024; Tomczyk & Lizde, 2022).

Elhai et al. (2020) highlighted that fear of missing out (FoMO), often associated with nomophobia, can drive individuals to prioritize smartphone use over face-to-face interactions, resulting in phubbing behaviors. These findings align with the current findings by illustrating how the psychological pressures of smartphone dependency manifest in social settings. Moreover, a systematic review by Hessari et al. (2022) emphasized the prevalence of nomophobia in workplace environments and its detrimental effects on employee well-being and productivity. The review noted that increased anxiety and stress from nomophobia could lead to frequent interruptions and decreased engagement in collaborative tasks, further supporting the present study's results regarding the relationship between nomophobia and phubbing. Understanding this correlation is essential for organizations aiming to foster healthier digital habits among employees. By recognizing the link between these two phenomena, interventions can be designed to mitigate the negative effects of smartphone dependency on workplace interactions and overall employee satisfaction.

4.1. Limitations

Convenience sampling could limit generalizability. Self-reporting scales were used, and the data was collected online that results in potential response bias. The study cannot be generalized as it has a small sample size. The cross-sectional method was utilized in this study. Hence, the causation cannot be interpreted.

5. Conclusion

Nomophobia was positively related to phubbing among IT Employees. It indicates that as nomophobia increases, so does the tendency to engage in phubbing behaviors.

Compliance with ethical standards

Acknowledgments

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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