

Nomophobia And Toxic Relationship Patterns Among Young Adults (18–30): A Sequential Mixed-Methods Study

Jigyasa Goyal. Author¹, Ishita Gouchwal. Author², Aradhya Sharma. Author³
^{1,2,3}*IILM University, Gurugram*

Abstract—The growing dependence on smartphones among young adults has raised worries about nomophobia's effect on social connections. This research investigates the link between nomophobia and toxic relationship patterns in people aged 18–30 through a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach. During the quantitative phase, participants filled out the Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q) to evaluate smartphone dependence and examine gender variations. Statistical evaluation indicated no considerable difference between males and females ($p = .884$), implying similar levels of nomophobia between genders. The qualitative phase included semi-structured interviews, which were thematically analyzed, uncovering significant patterns: anxiety due to inability to reach partners, frequent message checking, miscommunication via text, feelings of neglect from excessive phone use, and smartphones serving as emotional escapes. The excessive use of devices can lead to adverse effects on communication, emotional bonds, and relationship strain, despite their role in improving connectivity. Studies show that nomophobia affects relationship dynamics and promotes harmful behaviors, regardless of gender differences. These findings highlight the necessity of establishing digital well-being programs and enhancing communication strategies within social and romantic settings as dependence on smartphones increases.

Index Terms—Nomophobia, Relationship dynamics, Smartphone dependence, Toxic relationships, young adults

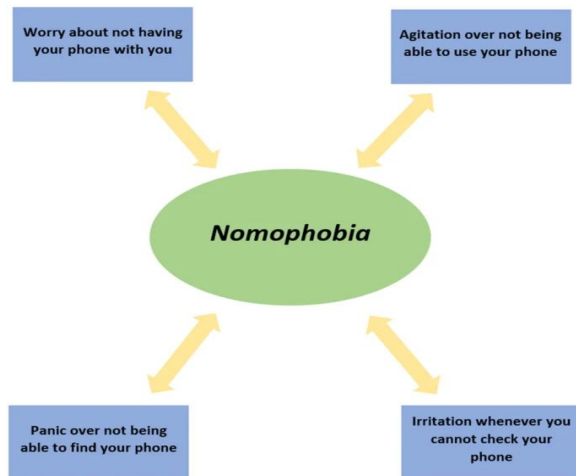
I. INTRODUCTION

As the global order changes and globalization persists, the importance of the internet, computers, smartphones, tablets, and other technological devices is increasing (Tomczyk & Lizde, 2020). At first, phones were used only for communication, but today,

they are used for various online activities such as sending and receiving emails, interacting with others, accessing social media, and watching or uploading videos. Nomophobia refers to the psychological distress experienced when individuals are separated from their mobile devices or lose access to network connectivity. As smartphone dependency has grown globally, nomophobia has emerged as a clinically relevant concern, particularly among younger populations who report heightened anxiety, disrupted concentration, and impaired sleep when separated from their devices (Yildirim & Correia, 2015).

Many young people use the Internet with specific objectives in mind, trying to limit their online activity to a certain degree. However, some struggle with self-control, leading to difficulties in their academic and social lives due to excessive Internet use. Internet addiction, characterized by overuse and inappropriate engagement with the Internet, is recognized as a major factor contributing to irresponsibility in daily life and family interactions, potentially leading to emotional instability (Anderson, 2001; Davis, 2001; Lin & Tsai, 2002; Ryu et al., 2004; Young & Rogers, 1998).

Modern society relies heavily on sophisticated technology for daily activities. The increasing global use of smartphones and their various apps has a notable influence on the social connections, self-representation, knowledge sharing, and individual development of the youth. Previously considered as mere devices, smartphones have transformed into indispensable instruments in contemporary society because of their ability to carry out a wide range of functions using advanced operating systems, touchscreen interfaces, and online access.



Nomophobia and Anxiety

In today's modern era of technology, smartphones play a critical role in socializing, communicating, and obtaining information, particularly among young individuals and students in higher education. Nevertheless, an excessive use of smartphones and a lack of self-control have recently been connected with mental health problems rather than the social and educational advantages they offer. Excessive usage and the societal expectation to remain connected have been associated with mental health conditions such as unease, sadness, mental exhaustion, and the fear of missing out (Elhai et al., Przybylski et al., 2017; Rodríguez-García et al., 2020).

Studies propose that an overindulgence in smartphones can result in psychological problems such as addictive behavior, uneasiness, despondency, hostility, seclusion, and even disorders of character (Elhai et al., Kim et al., 2019). Additionally, a continual use of smartphones has been proven to greatly hinder focus, sleep quality, and academic achievement.

Nomophobia, which is the apprehension of being separated from one's cell phone, has emerged as a notable psychological concern in contemporary times (Yildirim & Correia, 2015). Research demonstrates that nomophobia is directly linked to increased use of social media, addiction to the internet, overreliance on smartphones, and social unease (Gezgin et al., 2018; King et al., 2013). It is crucial to note that nomophobia is not solely a technological problem; it has profound emotional and social origins. Feelings of isolation have been recognized as a possible connection between problematic smartphone use and

nomophobia, prompting individuals to resort to their smartphones to handle feelings of social seclusion (Gezgin et al., 2018; Rodríguez-García et al., 2020).

In order to understand the impacts of the overuse of smartphones on the mental health of an individual, it is also essential to understand the concept of loneliness and emotional regulation. Emotional regulation is defined by Gross (1998) as the strategies that are employed by an individual to regulate their feelings according to the timing and expression of the emotions. While emotional regulation has been linked to anxiety and depression, it is also connected to positive mental health outcomes (Schäfer et al. (2017)). Studies indicate that struggles with managing emotions are related to feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and the misuse of smartphones (Schäfer et al. (2017)).

Gender Differences and Relationship Dynamics

A comprehensive cross-sectional analysis discovered that 24.1% of participants exhibited mild nomophobia, 57.0% experienced moderate nomophobia, and 18.9% faced severe nomophobia, with only a minimal number showing low levels of the condition. The research also pointed out differences between genders, revealing that women were more likely to experience severe nomophobia compared to mild or moderate variations. Furthermore, those who were unemployed generally displayed higher levels of nomophobia severity. An inverse correlation was noted between age and the severity of nomophobia, suggesting that younger individuals showed greater reliance on mobile phones (León-Mejía et al., 2021; Rodríguez-García et al., 2020).

Attachment styles can be considered inherent promoters of nomophobia. In this context, attachment refers to the way an individual focuses a significant portion of their mental resources, thoughts, and emotions on a specific idea, object, or personal connection (Van Gordon et al., 2018). According to attachment theory, the internal mental frameworks we carry influence our self-perception and our views of others, including our sense of worthiness for love and the availability of support from others (Bowlby, 1969/1982; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Although the original attachment theory centered on the caregiver-child relationship, subsequent research expanded it to encompass negative associations such as obsession, compulsive work, and addictions (Andreassen et al., 2013; Van Gordon et al., 2018).

Toxic relationships

The increasing tension in teenage relationships, coupled with the problem of nomophobia—an overwhelming fear of being without a mobile device—poses a serious issue. Nomophobia is closely linked to mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, and feelings of loneliness, as teens find it difficult to disconnect from their smartphones (Twenge & Campbell, 2018). This dependence leads to weakened personal relationships, as people spend more time engaging in online activities and less time in meaningful, in-person interactions. Additionally, social media's impact and the fear of missing out (FoMO) heighten feelings of inadequacy and social isolation (de Bruijn, 2021).

Recent research has shown that excessive mobile phone usage and nomophobia can negatively affect interpersonal relationships, leading to conflicts, dissatisfaction, and disrupted communication patterns. Studies on smartphone use and relationships have found that high levels of nomophobia are linked to low marital satisfaction and increased interference in daily life. In a recent study involving parents, those with high nomophobia scores reported lower marital satisfaction, suggesting that excessive phone use can disrupt quality time and emotional connections between partners.

For instance, Gladden (2016) examined daily smartphone usage across various age groups and its impact on social interactions. The study revealed that most participants used their smartphones for 3–5 hours daily, with 75% primarily engaging with social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook. Notably, individuals aged 18 to 30 were most affected, as their dependence on smartphones disrupted in-person social interactions. This reliance on mobile devices can lead to poor communication, reduced closeness, and conflicts in relationships, highlighting how nomophobia and excessive phone use can be linked to harmful relational dynamics.

Excessive use of smartphones can result in divided attention during social interactions, as individuals prioritize their devices over engaging with their partners or peers. This ongoing distraction may result in miscommunication, a sense of neglect, and a reduction in emotional closeness, ultimately leading to conflicts within relationships. In the realm of nomophobia, this behavior is intensified by the anxiety

of being without a phone, which drives individuals to check messages or social media even amidst private discussions.

Fear of inaccessibility and FoMO

The Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), described as "a widespread anxiety that others might be enjoying rewarding experiences from which one is excluded," plays a crucial psychological role in the excessive consumption of digital media (Przybylski et al., 2013). The compulsive urge to check social networking sites often stems from FoMO, as people feel they must constantly keep track of others' activities, accomplishments, and social gatherings. Given that smartphones are the main avenue for engaging in online interactions, this ongoing behavior can result in smartphone addiction. Research indicates that higher levels of FoMO are associated with increased smartphone usage and anxiety tied to smartphone engagement (Rozgonjuk et al., 2019). As a result, FoMO could be a significant factor leading to the onset of nomophobia (Elamrousy et al., 2024).

Despite other studies (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; Whiting & Williams, 2013) indicating a relationship between FoMO and nomophobia and suggesting that FoMO may be a significant predictor of nomophobia, there is limited empirical data on the mediating role of social media addiction in the FoMO to nomophobia association, particularly in non-Western contexts. With little information on confounding variables, sociocultural effects, or other types of digital dependencies, most empirical research (Fabris et al., 2020) has either only examined the bivariate relationship or independently assessed the FoMO or nomophobia measures. It is essential to recognize that numerous psychological factors contribute to nomophobia, connection, and future behavior patterns or beliefs that result in an excessive reliance on devices.

Research Gap

While the body of research on nomophobia has grown considerably in recent years, existing studies have predominantly focused on individual-level outcomes such as stress, anxiety, academic performance, and social media addiction (Notara et al., 2021; Gezgin et al., 2018). The relational consequences of nomophobia particularly its role in fostering emotional dependence, jealousy, controlling behaviors, and communication

breakdown within romantic relationships remain largely underexplored. This represents a significant gap, given that smartphones are deeply embedded in how young adults initiate, maintain, and navigate intimate relationships.

Similarly, research on toxic relationship patterns has rarely considered the role of technology-mediated behaviors as contributing factors (Twenge & Campbell, 2018). The majority of existing studies rely heavily on quantitative methodologies, which, while useful for identifying associations, are limited in their ability to capture the lived experiences and personal narratives that underlie harmful relational dynamics. A mixed-methods approach is therefore needed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how nomophobia shapes interpersonal behavior.

Furthermore, the bulk of nomophobia research has been conducted in Western contexts, with comparatively little attention given to the Indian and South Asian setting, where rapid digitalization intersects with distinct cultural norms around relationships, gender roles, and emotional expression (Bragazzi & Del Puente, 2014). Given these gaps, the present study aimed to examine the relationship between nomophobia and toxic relationship patterns among young adults aged 18–30 using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, contributing both contextual and methodological depth to the existing literature.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Conceptual framework of nomophobia:

Nomophobia, which stands for "no-mobile-phone phobia," describes the anxiety experienced when one is without a mobile phone. This phenomenon has become a notable psychological concern due to the increasing dependence on smartphones, influencing social interactions and mental health (Notara et al., 2021). The fear of being without a mobile phone, referred to as nomophobia, is associated with various psychological and behavioral symptoms, especially among younger individuals (Kanmani et al., 2017). These symptoms encompass feelings of anxiety, stress, and dependence, prompting individuals to habitually check their devices (Rodríguez et al., 2020). Overuse of mobile phones can lead to social withdrawal and hindered communication abilities,

negatively impacting empathy and conflict resolution skills.

Building on this evidence, Significant physical health issues, such as repetitive motion injuries, pain in the elbows, wrists, back, shoulders, and fingers, as well as migraines and numbness from extended smartphone use, have also been connected to excessive mobile phone use (Bhattacharya et al., 2019; Kim, 2013). Mobile phone use has also been linked to low self-esteem, a lack of confidence, and poor social skills in establishing interpersonal interactions (Gezgin et al., 2). A worrying issue that has to be addressed is the rising prevalence of nomophobia among younger people. According to Dixit et al. (2009), about 73% of students always carried their cell phones, and 20% reported feeling stressed out when they weren't using them or when their batteries ran out. Nomophobia is becoming more common. common among young adults and adolescents, especially college students, who have a high prevalence of severe nomophobia (Shirodkar, 2023; Tuco et al., 2023). According to research, this illness may have serious repercussions for this group, such as poor academic performance and sleep difficulties. Numerous psychological problems, including worry, stress, reliance, and low self-esteem, are linked to nomophobia (018). According to Josephine and Asha (2023), a toxic relationship is an unhealthy interpersonal bond marked by one partner's rude and demeaning actions as well as a lack of support from the other. People who are in toxic relationships frequently experience detrimental effects on their mental and physical well-being.

Toxic relationships, also known as harmful partnerships, have become a major problem in the globe and have an impact on people's physical and mental health, particularly in teens and young adults. According to research, toxic relationships can affect social and academic conduct as well as lead to mental health issues like anxiety, despair, and low self-esteem.

Theory and Relationship Dynamics

Relationship dynamics refer to the recurring patterns through which partners communicate, respond to conflict, express emotional needs, and negotiate closeness or distance. In the context of nomophobia, frequent phone use and fear of disconnection may disrupt these patterns by increasing insecurity, reducing attention, and weakening emotional

availability. Over time, such disruptions may contribute to unhealthy cycles of dependence, mistrust, and conflict, which are characteristic of toxic relationship patterns. Therefore, relationship dynamics provide a useful framework for understanding how nomophobia may shape romantic relationships among young adults.

Attachment theory, originally formulated by Bowlby (1969/1982) and later expanded by Ainsworth, explains the emotional bond that develops between infants and their primary caregivers and its lasting influence on interpersonal functioning across the lifespan. Ainsworth identified three distinct attachment styles — secure, avoidant, and anxious/ambivalent — each reflecting different patterns of emotional regulation and relational behavior (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Hazen and Shaver (1987) extended this framework to adult romantic relationships, demonstrating that early attachment patterns persist into adulthood and shape how individuals experience love, intimacy, and commitment.

Many studies have consistently shown a connection between attachment styles and both relationship quality and mental health in adulthood. Research by Sagone et al. revealed notable links between adults' attachment styles, their satisfaction in relationships, and their psychological wellbeing, indicating that early relational experiences can have enduring effects on how people manage romantic relationships. In a more recent study, Sharma and Kaushik (2024) explored attachment styles and relationship satisfaction among young adults aged 18–39, discovering that insecure attachment which is marked by avoidance or anxiety was negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction. These results underscore the potential for attachment insecurity to lead to unhealthy relational patterns. Additionally, Demircioğlu and Göncü Köse (2021) showed that excessive use of digital technology, including social media addiction, is associated with relationship challenges, especially among those with insecure attachment styles and increased sensitivity to rejection. Taken together, these studies suggest that attachment insecurity may amplify the relational risks associated with nomophobia, as individuals who already struggle with emotional regulation and fear of abandonment may be more susceptible to the anxiety-

driven smartphone use that characterizes nomophobic behavior.

Emotional Dependence and Validation Seeking

Emotional dependence is an unhealthy mental state where a person excessively relies on another individual, such as a partner, friend, or family member, for approval, happiness, and emotional security. It involves an inability to regulate personal emotions, leading to a deep fear of abandonment, feelings of insecurity, and the belief that life is meaningless without the other person.

Individuals who struggle with regulating their emotions often find comfort and relief by turning to their smartphones, using them as an escape from real-life emotional challenges. This is evident in the high levels of smartphone usage, feelings of distress when separated from their devices, and the pursuit of social validation through messaging and social media interactions. Research indicates that people who have difficulty with cognitive reappraisal strategies (interpreting situations) and expressive suppression strategies (controlling emotional expression) are more prone to developing problematic smartphone use as a coping mechanism for their emotional difficulties (Delavarpour et al., 2019; Ercenzig et al., 2020; Gonçalves et al., 2020; Horwood & Anglim, 2021).

As technology increasingly influences user behavior, individuals seek emotional support and affirmation from mobile devices. This persistent use highlights the dependency on technology, which can impact interactions with partners, potentially leading to more conflicts, misunderstandings, and reliance patterns in romantic and social relationships. Understanding the link between nomophobia and harmful relationship dynamics will offer valuable insights into how nomophobia may affect young adults' relationship dynamics.

Role of Technology in Romantic Relationships

As smartphone technology develops quickly on a global scale, worries about how these gadgets affect interpersonal connections and the quality of our interactions with others have surfaced. Smartphones can improve communication between love partners, according to research with 433 young people. The fact that a greater reliance on smartphones is associated with less affectionate communication and lower relationship satisfaction, however, provides important

insight into how phones may impede communication despite more encounters. Few studies have examined the relationship between mobile communication and important relational processes in romantic partnerships, despite the fact that many emphasize the importance of mobile communication in intimate relationships. Partners may benefit from increasing mobile phone use because more in-person communication frequently indicates better relationship dynamics (e.g., Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Duck, 1994). Therefore, whether communication between romantic partners via mobile devices is linked to relational qualities including relational uncertainty, love and commitment, and attachment style in a way similar to face-to-face interactions is a major research question in this study. When considered collectively, these findings imply that young people' interpersonal behavior and the quality of their relationships may be significantly influenced by nomophobia. While nomophobia and relationship problems have been studied independently in the past, phone dependence's potential role in toxic relationship patterns has received less attention. As a result, the current study aims to investigate this connection more thoroughly and offer a more comprehensive explanation of the problem.

III. METHODOLOGY

Aim:

The current study used a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design to examine the effects of nomophobia on toxic relationship patterns in young adults aged 18-30 years.

Research Hypothesis

H1: Higher levels of nomophobia will be associated with higher levels of toxic relationship patterns among young adults.

H0: There is no significant association between nomophobia and toxic relationship patterns among young adults.

Research Question:

Q1 Is there a significant relationship between nomophobia and toxic relationship patterns among young adults?

Q2 To what extent does nomophobia predict toxic relationship behaviours among young adults?

Q3 Does nomophobia contribute to unhealthy relational dynamics such as jealousy, emotional dependency, and controlling behaviours?

Research Objectives:

To assess the level of nomophobia among young adults.

To examine the association between nomophobia and toxic relationship patterns.

To determine whether nomophobia significantly predicts toxic relational behaviours.

To explore whether higher levels of nomophobia are associated with increased emotional dependency and relationship insecurity.

Research Design

This study used a Sequential Explanatory Mixed-Methods Research Design, starting with the gathering and analysis of quantitative data, which was subsequently complemented by qualitative data to offer a more thorough understanding and clarification of the quantitative findings. During the quantitative phase, a questionnaire was employed to assess the level of nomophobia, while the qualitative phase involved conducting interviews and performing thematic analysis to delve into participants' experiences and perspectives regarding smartphone dependency.

Sample

The research adopted a non-probability sampling method. Participants were selected through convenience sampling, and elements of snowball sampling were evident as participants were encouraged to distribute the survey link within their networks.

Variables

1. Independent Variable (IV): Nomophobia
2. Dependent Variable (DV): Toxic Relationship Patterns

Participants

The study recruited young adults aged 18–30 as participants, reflecting the population most affected by smartphone dependence and potential toxic relationship patterns. A total of 80 participants were

included in the quantitative phase, while a smaller subset of 16 participants participated in the qualitative interviews focusing on toxic relationships.

Tools

- a. The Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q; Yildirim & Correia, 2015) was employed to evaluate participants' levels of nomophobia. This scale comprises 20 items, each rated on a 7-point Likert scale, assessing fears related to communication difficulties, loss of connectedness, inability to access information, and reduced convenience. Higher scores reflect a more severe degree of nomophobia.
- b. A semi-structured interview guide was used to gather information on participants' experiences of toxic relationship patterns.

Inclusion criteria included:

- Age between 18 and 30 years
- People who use regular smartphones
- Willingness to participate in both phases of the study

Exclusion criteria included:

- Individuals diagnosed with severe mental health conditions
- Participants who did not consent to either the survey or interview

Instruments

A demographic questionnaire was used to gather information on:

- Age
- Gender (Male, Female, Non-binary/Other, prefer not to say)

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring participant safety, confidentiality, and voluntariness.

- **Informed Consent:** Obtained electronically and verbally; full study details provided.
- **Voluntary Withdrawal:** Participants could skip questions or exit anytime without penalty.
- **Confidentiality/Anonymity:** No identifiers collected; pseudonyms used; researcher-only access.

- **Data Protection:** Password-protected, encrypted storage; retained for academic use only, then deleted.

Procedure

In order to gain a deeper understanding of how nomophobia affects the relationship dynamics of young adults (18–30), this study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, starting with a quantitative phase and ending with a qualitative phase.

Quantitative Phase: Convenience sampling; participants completed the Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q) post-consent to assess smartphone dependence (e.g., anxiety, connectivity fears). Analyzed for overall levels and gender differences.

Qualitative Phase: Volunteers from quantitative participants underwent semi-structured interviews on smartphone habits, emotional responses, digital misunderstandings, and relationship impacts. Recorded with consent, transcribed, and thematically analyzed.

Results from both phases were integrated to link nomophobia with toxic relationship patterns.

IV. RESULTS

Quantitative Results: Nomophobia Levels by Gender

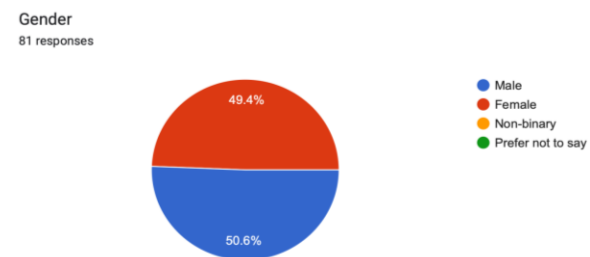


Fig. 1 Gender Distribution of Participants

Table I Independent Samples t-Test Results for NMP-Q Scores by Gender

Variables	Group	Mean	N	SD	SEM	T	DF	SED
Scores	Boys	81.82	44	26.38	3.98	0.146	76	5.677
	Girls	82.65	34	22.74	3.90			

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation; SEM = standard error of the mean.

Thus, the null hypothesis was retained: nomophobia levels did not differ significantly by gender ($p > 0.05$).

Qualitative Findings

In the qualitative phase of the study, the aim was to explore participants' views and experiences regarding smartphone use and its effects on interpersonal relationships. Thematic analysis was applied to the verbatim transcriptions of the semi-structured interview data. The responses were systematically analyzed and coded to identify significant patterns and recurring themes in the participants' narratives. Several categories emerged during the coding process and were subsequently grouped into broader themes that captured the key aspects of the participants' experiences.

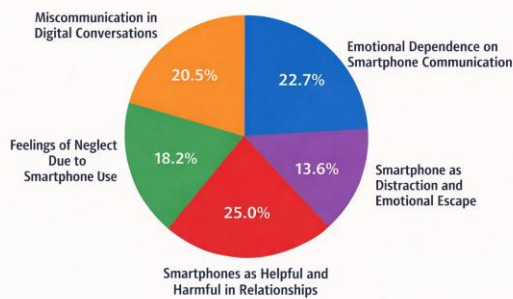


Fig. 2 Distribution of Themes from Thematic Analysis

Theme 1: Emotional Dependence on Smartphone Communication

According to the interviews, smartphones are important for maintaining emotional ties in intimate partnerships. When they were unable to get in touch with their spouse or get a response for an extended length of time, many individuals expressed feelings of fear, discomfort, or curiosity. This implies that young adults' relational reassurance now heavily relies on continuous digital communication.

Male Participant:

“If the person doesn’t reply for many hours, I start getting stressed and keep checking my phone again and again.”

Female Participant:

“When I cannot contact my partner through the phone, I feel uncomfortable and anxious.”

Several participants also explained that smartphones help them maintain closeness, especially when physical meetings are not possible. However, the reliance on constant communication sometimes

creates emotional distress when that communication is interrupted.

Female Participant:

“It is important to stay connected because that’s how we maintain communication in relationships.”

Theme 2: Miscommunication in Digital Conversations
Text lacks tone/context, leading to misunderstandings and conflicts. Face-to-face resolves via non-verbal cues.

Male Participant:

“Sometimes messages go out of context because you cannot understand the person’s tone through text.”

Female Participant:

“When you say something over text, the other person sometimes understands it differently.”

Theme 3: Feelings of Neglect Due to Smartphone Use
Many participants discussed experiences of feeling ignored or emotionally distant when someone used their smartphone during social interactions. Excessive smartphone engagement during conversations was perceived as a form of divided attention, which negatively affected the quality of interpersonal communication.

Male Participant:

“When we are sitting with friends and someone keeps using their phone, it feels like they are listening only half-heartedly.”

Female Participant:

“If my partner is using their phone while talking to me, it feels like the attention is divided.”

Theme 4: Smartphones as Both Helpful and Harmful in Relationships

Participants also described the dual role of smartphones in relationships. While smartphones help maintain communication and connectivity, excessive dependence on them can negatively affect relationship quality.

Male Participant:

“Smartphones help you stay connected, but if you depend on them too much it can create anxiety and misunderstandings.”

Female Participant:

"Phones help maintain relationships, especially when people live far away."

Theme 5: Smartphone as distraction and emotional escape

Many participants said that when they were bored, anxious, or depressed, they tended to use their phones more. By doing this, they were often able to temporarily put off thinking about their emotions or interpersonal problems.

Male Participant:

"When I feel sad, I start scrolling on my phone and don't realize how much time has passed."

Female Participant:

"Sometimes instead of talking about my feelings, I just keep using my phone."

V. CONCLUSION

The current study sought to investigate how young adults' smartphone use, emotional experiences, and interpersonal dynamics relate to one another. Gender did not significantly affect the measured variable, according to the quantitative results, which showed no difference between boys and girls. This implies that both groups' smartphone-related behaviors and psychological effects are comparable. The qualitative results offer a more profound understanding of the impact smartphones have on relationships and emotional health. Thematic analysis revealed that smartphones significantly contribute to emotional reliance, with ongoing communication associated with seeking reassurance in relationships. At the same time, problems such as miscommunication in online exchanges, feelings of being overlooked during face-to-face interactions, and using smartphones as a means of emotional escape were frequently mentioned. Participants also highlighted the dual nature of smartphones, describing them as helpful for maintaining connections while also being detrimental when excessively used.

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