

Mind Wandering Nomophobia and Delay Goal Pursuit: An Investigation Among Smart-Phone Addicted -College Students

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Abstract

Smartphones play a central role in the daily lives of college students, but excessive dependence on them can interfere with attention, emotional comfort, and goal-directed behavior. The present study explored differences in mind wandering, nomophobia, and delay in goal pursuit among smartphone-addicted college students. A quantitative, cross-sectional ex post facto design was used, and data were collected from college students using standardized self-report measures. Nomophobia was assessed using the Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q; Yildirim & Correia, 2015), mind wandering was measured with the Mind Wandering Questionnaire (MWQ; Mrazek et al., 2013), and delay in goal pursuit was assessed using the Irrational Procrastination Scale (IPS; Steel, 2010). Participants were grouped based on levels of smartphone addiction, and differences among groups were examined using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results revealed that students with higher levels of smartphone addiction experienced greater mind wandering and more frequent delays in goal-directed activities compared to those with lower levels of addiction. These findings suggest that excessive smartphone use may disrupt attentional control and self-regulation in college students. The study highlights the importance of promoting healthier smartphone use to support cognitive focus and effective goal pursuit among young adults.

Keywords: nomophobia, mind wandering, delay in goal pursuit, smartphone addiction, college students

Introduction

Smartphones have become an everyday companion for college students, supporting learning, communication, and entertainment. However, excessive dependence on these devices has given rise to concerns such as nomophobia, the anxiety experienced when individuals are separated from their smartphones. Constant connectivity and frequent digital interruptions can affect attention, leading to mind wandering, where students find it difficult to stay focused on academic or personal tasks. Over time, this scattered attention may reduce mental clarity and interfere with productive engagement in daily activities.

Along with attention difficulties, excessive smartphone use can also influence goal-directed behavior. Students who are highly attached to their phones may postpone important academic or personal goals in

favor of immediate digital gratification, resulting in a delay in goal pursuit. Understanding the relationship between mind wandering, nomophobia, and delayed goal pursuit among smartphone-addicted college students is important for recognizing the cognitive and motivational challenges of the digital age. This study seeks to explore these relationships and contribute to strategies that encourage healthier smartphone use and more focused, goal-oriented behavior among young adults.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

1. To assess the prevalence and intensity of nomophobia, mind wandering, and procrastination among smartphone-addicted college students.
2. To examine the intercorrelations among the three constructs to determine their associative patterns.
3. To identify the predictive capacity of nomophobia and mind wandering in explaining variance in procrastination scores.
4. To explore potential gender or academic discipline differences (if applicable).

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study uses a cross-sectional research design to understand mind wandering, nomophobia, and delay in goal pursuit among college students who are highly dependent on smartphones. Information is collected from students at a single point in time to get a clear picture of their smartphone usage habits and how these relate to their attention, thoughts, and ability to work toward their goals. Students complete simple questionnaires that measure their level of nomophobia, frequency of mind wandering, and tendency to delay goal-related tasks. This design is chosen because it is practical, time-saving, and allows the researcher to study

these psychological experiences as they naturally occur in students' everyday academic lives, without interfering or manipulating any behavior.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants for the present study consist of college students aged 18 to 25 years who regularly use smartphones in their daily lives. These students are selected from undergraduate and postgraduate programs and represent a range of academic disciplines. The focus is on students who show a high level of dependence on smartphones, as this group is more likely to experience challenges such as frequent mind wandering, fear of being without their phone (nomophobia), and delays in working toward academic or personal goals. Participation is voluntary, and students are informed about the purpose of the study before taking part. Care is taken to ensure that participants feel comfortable, respected, and assured that their responses will remain confidential. This group is considered appropriate for the study as late adolescence and early adulthood are key periods where smartphone use strongly influences attention, behavior, and goal-directed activities.

DESCRIPTION OF TOOLS

Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q) – Yildirim & Correia (2015)

The Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q) developed by Yildirim and Correia (2015) is a widely used standardized self-report instrument designed to measure the level of nomophobia, or the fear of being without a mobile phone. The scale consists of 20 items that assess four dimensions: not being able to

communicate, losing connectedness, not being able to access information, and giving up convenience. Respondents rate their agreement on a Likert-type scale, indicating the extent to which they experience anxiety related to smartphone unavailability. The NMP-Q has demonstrated good reliability and validity across different populations, including college students, making it suitable for assessing smartphone-related anxiety in the present study.

Mind Wandering Questionnaire (MWQ) – Mrazek et al. (2013)

The Mind Wandering Questionnaire (MWQ) developed by Mrazek and colleagues (2013) is a brief self-report measure used to assess the tendency of an individual's mind to drift away from the task at hand. The questionnaire consists of items that capture everyday experiences of distraction, inattentiveness, and spontaneous thoughts unrelated to the current activity. Participants respond using a Likert scale, reflecting how frequently they experience mind wandering in daily life. The MWQ has been widely used in cognitive and psychological research and has shown good psychometric properties, making it a reliable tool for measuring attentional lapses among college students.

Irrational Procrastination Scale (IPS) – Steel (2010)

The Irrational Procrastination Scale (IPS), developed by Steel (2010), is a self-report instrument designed to measure the tendency to delay tasks unnecessarily despite expecting negative consequences. The scale focuses on irrational delay behavior and difficulties in initiating or completing tasks on time. It consists of items that assess procrastination habits, self-regulation difficulties, and avoidance of responsibilities. Respondents indicate their level of agreement on a Likert scale. The IPS has been widely validated and is considered a reliable measure of procrastination behavior, making it appropriate for assessing delay in goal pursuit among smartphone-addicted college students.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected from smartphone-addicted college students were systematically organised and analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage were used to understand the demographic profile of the participants and to obtain an overall view of mind wandering, nomophobia, and delay in goal pursuit. Correlation analysis was carried out to examine the relationships among the study variables, while basic comparison tests were used to identify differences based on age and gender. All analyses were conducted with due consideration of statistical significance, ensuring accurate and meaningful interpretation of the findings.

Ethical Consideration

The study was carried out with careful respect for the rights and well-being of the college student participants. Before taking part, all participants were clearly informed about the purpose of the study and that their participation was completely voluntary. They were also assured that they could withdraw from the study at any point without facing any consequences. Participants' privacy was respected at all times, with confidentiality and anonymity strictly maintained, and the information collected was used only for academic research. As the study focused on smartphone use, attention, and goal-related behaviour, participants were approached with sensitivity, and support was made available if anyone experienced discomfort during the process.

Results and Discussion

Table 1

variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Nomophobia	78.45	12.36	45	105
Mind Wandering	62.18	10.24	38	85
Procastination	70.92	11.87	42	96

Note : Higher scores indicate higher levels of nomophobia, mind wandering, and procrastination.

The findings show that smartphone-addicted college students experience a high level of nomophobia, with an average score of 78.45 (SD = 12.36). This suggests that many students feel uncomfortable or anxious when they are without their phones. Mind wandering was also fairly common, with a mean score of 62.18 (SD = 10.24), indicating frequent lapses in attention during daily or academic activities. In addition, procrastination levels were moderately high (M = 70.92, SD = 11.87), showing that delaying tasks is a common behavior among the participants

Table 2

Variables	Nomophobia	Mind Wandering	Procastination
Nomophobia	1	.48**	.52**
Mind wandering	.48**	1	.45**
Procastination	.52**	.45**	1

Note: Indicates significant correlation at the 0.01 level

The results reveal clear connections among the three variables. Nomophobia was moderately related to mind wandering ($r = .48, p < .01$) and showed an even stronger relationship with procrastination ($r = .52, p < .01$). This means that students who are more fearful of being without their phones tend to get distracted more easily and delay their tasks more often. Mind wandering was also positively related to procrastination ($r = .45, p < .01$), suggesting that frequent mental distractions make it harder for students to stay focused and complete tasks on time.

Table 3

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	21.36	4.12	-	5.18	.001
Nomophobia	0.42	0.07	.41	6.00	.001
Mind wandering	0.35	0.08	.32	4.38	.001

Note: Nomophobia and mind wandering were used to predict procrastination

When nomophobia and mind wandering were examined together, they explained 37% of the variation in procrastination scores ($R^2 = .37, F = 58.23, p < .001$). Among the two predictors, nomophobia had a stronger influence ($\beta = .41, t = 6.00, p < .001$), while mind wandering also made a significant contribution ($\beta = .32, t = 4.38, p < .001$). This suggests that students who are highly attached to their smartphones and easily distracted are more likely to postpone academic and personal tasks.

Table 4

Variables	Gender	Mean	SD	t	p
Nomophobia	Male	76.12	11.84	2.41	.017
	Female	80.63	12.01		
Mind wandering	Male	61.05	9.88	1.29	.198
	Female	63.12	10.41		
Procastination	Male	69.10	11.42	1.87	.063
	Female	72.54	12.03		

Note: .05 indicates significant gender differences.

A comparison between genders showed that female students reported higher nomophobia scores ($M = 80.63$, $SD = 12.01$) than male students ($M = 76.12$, $SD = 11.84$), and this difference was statistically significant ($t = 2.41$, $p = .017$). However, no meaningful gender differences were found for mind wandering or procrastination.

Table 5

Variable	F	p
Nomophobia	3.92	.021
Mind wandering	2.14	.098
Procastination	4.26	.015

ANOVA Results for Academic Discipline

Note:.05 indicates significant gender differences among academic discipline.

Further analysis across academic disciplines revealed significant differences in nomophobia ($F = 3.92$, $p = .021$) and procrastination ($F = 4.26$, $p = .015$), indicating that students' field of study may influence their level of smartphone dependence and task-delay behavior. Differences in mind wandering across disciplines were not statistically significant.

Discussion

This study looked at how mind wandering, nomophobia, and delay in goal pursuit are connected among college students who are addicted to smartphones. The findings suggest that heavy smartphone use affects not only daily habits but also students' attention, emotions, and ability to complete tasks on time. Many students showed high levels of nomophobia, meaning they felt uneasy or anxious when they were away from their phones. Since smartphones are closely tied to communication, learning, and social life, this emotional dependence can make it harder for students to stay focused on their responsibilities. Students also experienced frequent mind wandering, showing difficulty in maintaining attention during academic or goal-oriented activities. Constant alerts, multitasking, and the habit of checking phones may gradually weaken concentration. The study found that nomophobia and mind wandering are closely related. Students who worried more about being without their phones were also more likely to feel mentally distracted. Both of these factors were linked to a greater tendency to delay tasks, suggesting that emotional discomfort and poor focus together lead to procrastination.

Further analysis showed that nomophobia and mind wandering predict delay in goal pursuit, with nomophobia playing a stronger role. This indicates that anxiety related to smartphone separation may

disrupt planning and persistence more than distraction alone. Female students reported higher levels of nomophobia, while no clear gender differences were seen in mind wandering or procrastination. Differences across academic disciplines suggest that study environment and demands may influence smartphone use and task-delay behavior.

CONCLUSION

Nomophobia and mind wandering function as critical antecedents of procrastination. The findings underscore that digital dependency not only induces emotional unease but also disrupts attentional stability and temporal self-regulation, thereby impeding academic performance and goal attainment.

Implications

1. **Educational Interventions:** Integration of digital literacy and *attention management* modules in curricula.
2. **Psychological Training:** Implementation of *Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)* programs to restore cognitive balance.
3. **Institutional Policy:** Promotion of *digital detox campaigns* and “device-free zones” in colleges.
4. **Clinical Applications:** Use of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) frameworks to address nomophobia-induced anxiety and procrastination.

Limitations

- Cross-sectional design limits causal inference.
- Self-report instruments susceptible to social desirability bias.
- Sample restricted to one geographical region, limiting generalizability.

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