Tied to the Mobile Phone
Exploring the Nature of Nomophobia Among the Students of BUP

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Abstract

Now-a-days mobile phone has become a device without which one cannot live. There are some people who are always glued to their phones, constantly checking it throughout the day. This habit has turned into such an obsession that a new modern-day phobia has been emerged, the fear related to lose the reach of information and communication by losing access to mobile phone is called no mobile phone phobia, in short Nomophobia. This study focuses on this trending phobia by investigating the prevalence and nature of it among young undergraduate students. It aims to identify the level of Nomophobia among the students of Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) and finds some variables influencing the traits. A quantitative survey on 132 undergraduates has been done based on a scientific Nomophobia questionnaire (NMP-Q). The result found nearly 70% students with moderate level of Nomophobia. It has also found that age, gender and duration of phone usage has direct effect on the students' nomophobic behavior.

Keywords: Nomophobia, Addiction, Mobile phone, BUP, NMP-Q

1. Introduction

A few decades ago, people were free from gadgets. They could roam around, talk to people and can have more interaction face to face. But now, things are not the same. We are all chained to our mobile phones by making it an integral part of our 'Self'. Mobile phone especially smartphones have huge benefits in our day to day activities. These benefits are increasing the dependency, sometimes over-dependency on smart phones. A recent study (Statista, 2019) revealed that the number of smart phone users is over 3.2 billion worldwide now, which they have estimated to rise over 3.8 billion by 2021.

Although having countless benefits, mobile phones come with so many side effects as well. Since the early emergence of World Wide Web, psychologists are talking about computer and internet addiction. But mobile phone addiction is comparatively a new phenomenon associated with a brand-new phobia: no mobile phone phobia, popularly named as 'Nomophobia'. One may lose his/her mobile phone, it can be stolen or can run out of battery. Even thinking of not having a fully charged phone around creates a fear. Having the fear of losing the mobile or not getting access to it, can create this phobia. It is a new yet less recognized disorder with personal, professional and social effects (Young, 2017) and we are quite powerless about it.

This study has explored the nature of Nomophobia among the students of Bangladesh

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University of Professionals (BUP). To understand the nature, a quantitative study has been done to analyze the level of Nomophobia and the influencing variables associated with it.

2. Background of the Study

In the year 2018, Nomophobia was crowned as 'word of the year' in the Cambridge Dictionary's word list where it is described as a fear or worry at the idea of being without your mobile phone or being unable to use it". Nomophobia is actually an abbreviation of 'no mobile phone phobia 'where users get panicked even with the idea of not having the phone (Peter, 2018).

The term has been coined as 'Nomophobia' by the UK post office, making it as a recognizable phobia of 21st century. They sponsored YouGov, a research organization to conduct a research in 2010, where they found that 53% of British citizens are suffering from Nomophobia about which they are totally unaware about. They found people being extremely nomophobic when they "lose their mobile phone, run out of battery or credit, or have no network coverage" (Elmore, 2015).

King et al (2013) think Nomophobia can occur not only for mobile phones but also for other computer mediated technologies as well such as a PC, laptop or tablet. He stated that any device that can have influence on human behavior by creating a virtual environment and can create a possible mental disorder should be addressed.

JB (2013) described it as behavioral addiction to mobile devices which not only create physical dependency but also psychological prisoning. According to him, it is a kind of fear which harms humans both mentally and physically.

The dangers of Nomophobia are gradually rising, so Dailymail tagged it 'the biggest phobia' of the world covering 66% of the world population (Dailymail, 2019). According to a recent report of CNN, Young people (18-24 yrs) are more at risk (2019) with this phobia. This is a rising trend especially among students. One study (News and News, 2019) found students staring at their mobile phones at least seven hours a day, making them sleep for only six hours daily. Some recent work focusing on students having Nomophobia (Elmore, 2019; Cheever et al., 2014; Sharma et al., 2015; Pavitra, Mahadeva and Madhukumar, 2015) made it as an important area to work on for both researchers and academicians.

3. Rationale of the Study

This study mainly focuses on exploring the nature of Nomophobia among university students which hopefully will make them aware about this less known phobia. This study can help them to become self-conscious by letting them know on which level they belong in this mobile phone addicted society.

4. Research Objective

The main objective of this research is to explore the nature of Nomophobia among the students of BUP, which will shed light on a comparatively new phobia of modern era. This study will make students aware about their unexplored psychological condition by making them conscious and giving them some thoughtful insight about their own Nomophobia

level. Considering all these, the specific objectives of this research are given below:

1. To identify the level of Nomophobia among the students of BUP
2. To explore the influence of different variables on the nomophobic behavior of students

5. Research Questions

Following the quantitative approach, considerable research questions for this study are:

1. At which level (high/medium/low) are most of the students of BUP standing?
2. Is there any influence of variables (age, gender, academic background, owning smart phones) on nomopobic behavior of students?

6. Literature Review

Nomophobia Among Students:

Some researchers (Cheever et al., 2014) found mentionable anxiety among students not being able to access the mobile phone within a 10-15-minute period. Nomophobia seems prevalent among Turkish students, where 42.6% young adult students face Nomophobia (Yildirim et al., 2016). They have the biggest fear of being 'unable to communicate' and being 'unable to have internet access'. Again, 'Running out of battery' is another biggest fear for them, while having a fully charged mobile phone is a matter of relief for them.

This study also investigated several variables like age, duration of mobile ownership, duration of smart phone ownership and gender. The study revealed that gender and the duration of smart phone ownership have positive effect on nomophobic behavior than the other two variables. Based on the Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q), it found female students showcasing more nomophobic behavior than male students.

Another quantitative study was done in India (Sharma et al., 2015) to address and analyze the gradual rise of Nomophobia among third year medical students. It was a cross sectional study with a pre-formed, pre-tested questionnaire on 130 medical students of Sri Aurobindo Institute of Medical Sciences, Indore.

According to the study, 73% students with age group of 22-24 years have high nomophobic tendency. Among them, 83% students said they had panic attacks when their mobile phone got lost or misplaced somehow. They confessed to have some side effects like headache and lethargy because of using their mobile phone too much. Although this study found the rate very alarming, some other studies in the same year (i.e. Pavitra, Mahadeva and Madhukumar, 2015) found only 39% medical students in Bangalore, India have nomophobic tendency.

Cell Phone Causing Distractions:

Some studies (Rashid and Asghar, 2016) showed positive relationship between cell phone and enhanced learning environment but some did not. One study (Mendoza et al, 2018) did an experimental research on cell phones having impact on the learning process. They did an experiment where two separate groups of students- one group having cell phones and another group without cell phones had to listen to 20 minutes of lecture.

The result shows having severe negative effect of cell phone usages on student's attention and learning. Most of the students especially having higher nomophobic tendency lost connection with the topic while having distractive texts in the middle of the lecture, while the others who did not have any cellphones were unable to hold their attention better and got good marks in the quiz exam.

Nomophobia and Smart Phone Addiction:

A study by Tran (2016) conducted an in-depth literature review of existing medical journals of PsycINFO and Google Scholar to understand the connection between smart phone addiction and Nomophobia. According to the study, most individuals are associated with their smart phones more than seven hours a day. The smartphone getting lost or not having charge cause symptoms like intense fear or anxiety, depression, trembling, perspiration, tachycardia, increased blood pressure, feelings of loneliness, and panic attacks.

Symptoms of Nomophobia and smart phone addiction are prevalent among adolescents. Soni, Upadhyay and Jain (2017) did a cross sectional study on 537 adolescents where they found the students having higher depression, anxiety and lack of sleep because of excessive use of smartphones. According to Bian and Leung (2015) cell phone addiction causes loneliness, shyness and withdrawal tendency.

Nomophobia and Social Context:

One study (Tams, Leger and Legoux, 2018) used a moderated mediation model to do a multi group path analysis on 270 smartphone users. The research showed that stress is one of the major consequences of Nomophobia with the influence of social threat which means Nomophobia generates the feeling that the user is being socially threatened when not using mobile phone.

Using demand-control-person model the result suggests that this stress can be reduced with two positive aspects coming together - low uncertainty and high control. It refers to a context where they know until when they cannot have regular access to their mobile phones and when they can have control on their regular usage.

Another research (Kneidinger-Mülle, 2019) attached several situational factors with Nomophobia by conducting an online survey on 146 German smartphone users. The result revealed that the fear created in individual if their cell phones get switched off can vary from person to person and situation to situation.

The result showcased several situational factors like long period of unavailability, place (whether user is away from home or not) and also user-oriented factors like fear of missing out, expectation of a phone call can have negative effect causing nomophobic behavior. Again, a cross sectional interaction shows that the same factors can vary from person to person depending on user characteristics.

A case study was conducted on an extremely nomophobic individual using computer mediated technology to avoid social interaction and remove stress. Results found that the use of medication and cognitive behavioral therapy is beneficial to reduce his level of Nomophobia to a satisfactory level.

Reviewing all available literatures, it can be said that not much research has been done on Nomophobia as it is a newly emerged and not-so-known phobia. Interestingly, most people are not aware of the fact that they are nomophobic. Again, few works have been done in the context of Bangladesh especially on Bangladeshi university students. Hopefully, this study will add great value in the research field by making students aware about their nomophobic situation and also will make them find the factors and signs causing Nomophobia.

Theoretical Framework: Measuring Nomophobia

In quantitative study, it is important to measure the level of Nomophobia to meet the first objective. Although King et al. (2013) has made a scientific questionnaire to address and measure several levels of Nomophobia, it is quite complicated to relate with social science research as it has more of a clinical dimension. Here, this study takes the NMP-Questionnaire of Yildirim and Correia (2015) to measure the level of Nomophobia in the first phrase of the research. Reasons behind adapting this questionnaire are:

1. It is a self-reported questionnaire. So, students can easily answer the questions, get their marks and measure their own level to know where they are standing.
2. This is relatively updated questionnaire which was developed very recently (2015).
3. This NMP-Questionnaire was designed following a mixed method. It fits well with the study design and objective.
4. The NMP-Q has 20 questions, each scored on a 7-point Likert scale. The total score on the NMP-Q is 20 at its lowest (20 * 1) or 140 (7 * 20) at its highest

Score	Interpretation
80	Absence of Nomophobia
21-59	Mid level of Nomophobia
60-99	Moderate level of Nomophobia
100-140	Severe level of Nomophobia

7. Methodology and Sampling

Methodology: This study followed the quantitative approach. A quantitative study has been done taking 132 undergraduate students from different departments of Bangladesh University of Professionals. A random sampling method was followed to pick students from BUP.

Collection of Data: Data was collected from the respondents using pen and paper. This study did not adopt online survey techniques because it might impact on the respondent feedback because most of the students use their mobile phone to fill up the online survey questions. In quantitative approach they were given a widely used validated survey questionnaire (Yildirim and Correia, 2015) to measure their level of Nomophobia. Alongside, they were asked to fill in some additional information regarding their age, gender, educational background and duration of smart phone ownership. The data collected from the first phase were analyzed with the help of SPSS software to find out different levels of Nomophobia and the influence of different variables on the nomophobic behavior of BUP students.

Analysis of Data: To conduct this study smoothly, researchers created subgroups in the four major variables (age, gender, academic background and owning smart phones) of the research. The study got representations from every subgroup of the four major variables and there were participations from all the Departments of BUP. For example, there were four subgroups in the age variables, and they are age, (18-19 years, 20-21 years, 22-23 years, and 24 years) academic background, and owning smart phones.

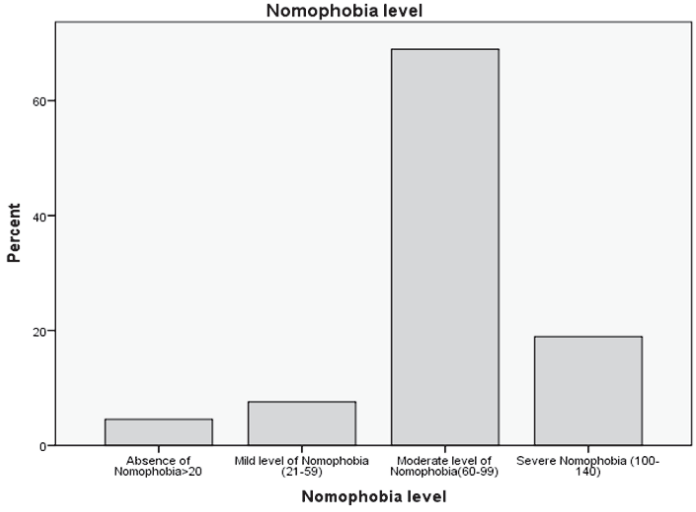
8. Findings of the Research

The findings of the survey are presented below:

8.1. Level of Nomophobia:

Table 1: Nomophobia Level of students of BUP

Nomophobia Level of BUP students					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Absence of Nomophobia (20)	6	4.5	4.5	4.5
	Mild level of Nomophobia (21-59)	10	7.6	7.6	12.1
	Moderate level of Nomophobia (60-99)	91	68.9	68.9	81.1
	Severe Nomophobia (100-140)	25	18.9	18.9	100.0
	Total	132	100.0	100.0	



Bar Chart 1: Nomophobia Level of BUP Students

One of the main objectives of the study was to find the level of Nomophobia of BUP students. We have got 132 volunteer respondents from all the departments of Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP). From our data we have found that around 69% (68.9) undergraduate students of BUP are at Moderate level of Nomophobia level. Around 19% (18.9%) students are severely nomophobic while 7.6% students are at the mild level of Nomophobia and 4.5% students are at the level of absence of Nomophobia.

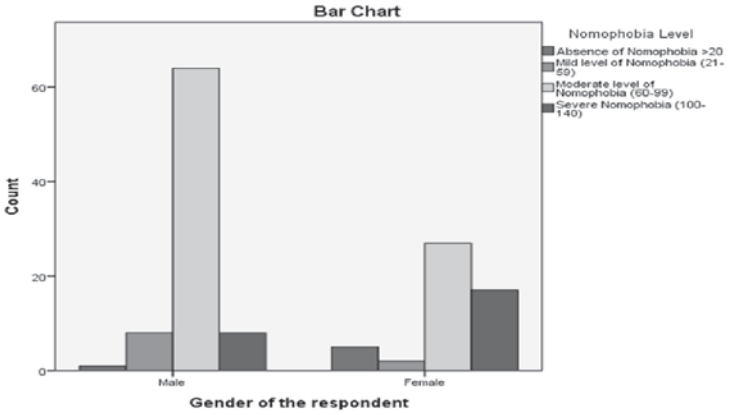
8.2. Gender and Nomophobia:

Table 2.1: Gender and Nomophobia Level

		Total score in the survey				Total	
		Absence of Nomophobia (20)	Mild level of Nomophobia (21-59)	Moderate level of Nomophobia (60-99)	Severe Nomophobia (100-140)		Valid %
Gender of the respondent	Male	1	8	64	8	81	61.4
	Female	5	2	27	17	51	38.6
Total		6	10	91	25	132	100.0

Table 2.2: Gender and Nomophobia percentage Level

		Total score in the survey				Total
		Absence of Nomophobia (20)	Mild level of Nomophobia (21-59)	Moderate level of Nomophobia (60-99)	Severe Nomophobia (100-140)	
Gender of the respondent	Male	1.2%	9.9%	79.0%	9.9%	100.0%
	Female	9.8%	3.9%	52.9%	33.3%	100.0%
Total		4.5%	7.6%	68.9%	18.9%	100.0%



Bar Chart 2: Gender and Nomophobia Percentage Level

Out of 132 respondents there were 81 (61.4%) male and 51 (38.6%) female students. From the table 2.2 we can see that most of the students from both genders are at a moderate level of Nomophobia. There are 79% male students at Moderate level of Nomophobia while 52.9% female students are at the same Nomophobia level. There are large number of female students (33.3%) at severe Nomophobia level and only 10% male students are at this Nomophobia level. Around 10% boys are at mild level of Nomophobia while 3.6% of girls are at this level. Only 1.2% boys are at the absence of Nomophobia level while the female percentage is 9.8%.

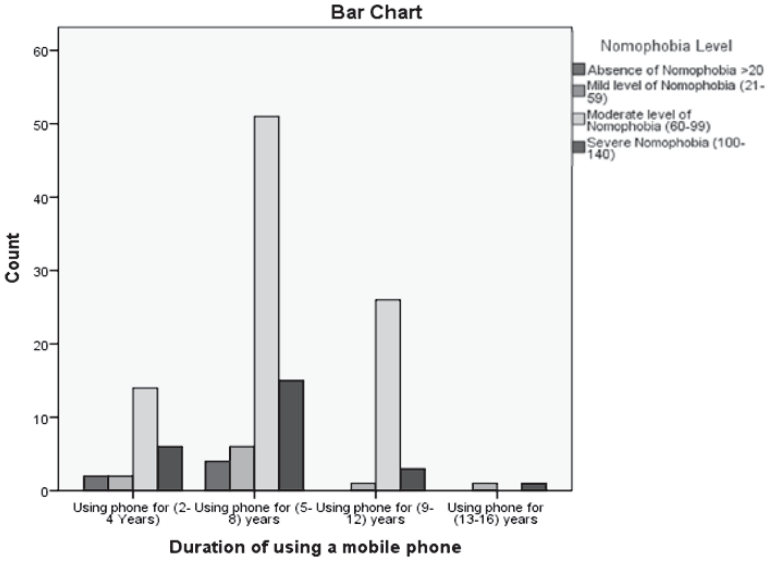
8.3. Usage of a Mobile Phone and Nomophobia:

Table 3.1: Duration of using a mobile phone and Nomophobia level

		Total score in the survey				Total	
		Absence of Nomophobia (20)	Mild level of Nomophobia (21-59)	Moderate level of Nomophobia (60-99)	Severe Nomophobia (100-140)		Valid %
Duration of using a mobile phone	Using phone for (2-4 Years)	2	2	14	6	24	18.2
	Using phone for (5-8) years	4	6	51	15	76	57.6
	Using phone for (9-12) years	0	1	26	3	30	22.7
	Using phone for (13-16) years	0	1	0	1	2	1.5
Total		6	10	91	25	132	100

Table 3.2: Duration of using a mobile phone and Nomophobia percentage level

		Total score in the survey				Total
		Absence of Nomophobia (20)	Mild level of Nomophobia (21-59)	Moderate level of Nomophobia (60-99)	Severe Nomophobia (100-140)	
Duration of using a mobile phone	Using phone for 2-4 Years	8.3%	8.3%	58.3%	25.0%	100.0%
	Using phone for 5-8 years	5.3%	7.9%	67.1%	19.7%	100.0%
	Using phone for 9-12 years		3.3%	86.7%	10.0%	100.0%
	Using phone for 13-16 years		50.0%		50.0%	100.0%
Total		4.5%	7.6%	68.9%	18.9%	100.0%



Bar Chart 3: Usage of Mobile Phone and Nomophobia

From the table 3.1 we can see that around 57.6% of the respondents are in the group those who are using mobile phone for five to eight years. This is the most dominant group in this research and within this group 67.1% student are at moderate level of Nomophobia and 19.7% students are at severe level of Nomophobia. From the group of phone users who have been using their phone for 2-4 years, around 25% of the students are at severe Nomophobia level. In the group who have been using phone for 9-12 years, around 86.7%

students are at moderate level of Nomophobia. In all the groups except using phone for 13-16 years we can see that the moderate level of Nomophobia is the most dominant.

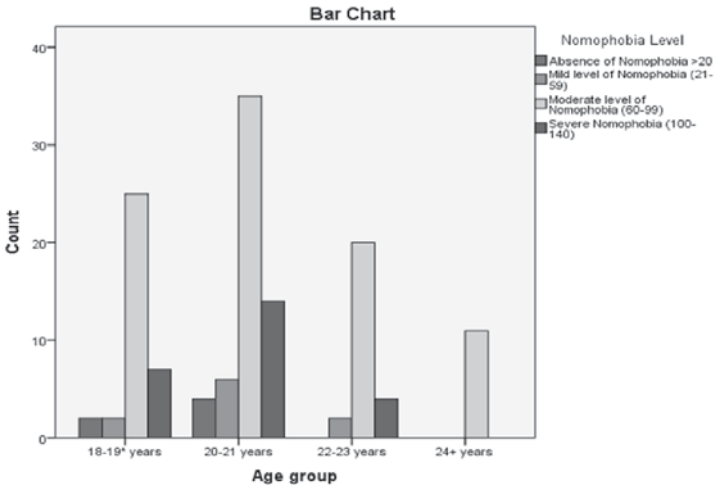
8.4. Age and Nomophobia:

Table 4.1: Age group and Nomophobia level

		Total score in the survey				Total	
		Absence of Nomophobia (20)	Mild level of Nomophobia (21-59)	Moderate level of Nomophobia (60-99)	Severe Nomophobia (100-140)		%
Age group	18-19* years	2	2	25	7	36	27.3
	20-21 years	4	6	35	14	59	44.7
	22-23 years	0	2	20	4	26	19.7
	24+ years	0	0	11	0	11	8.3
Total		6	10	91	25	132	100

Table 4.2: Age group and Nomophobia percentage level

		Total score in the survey				Total
		Absence of Nomophobia (20)	Mild level of Nomophobia (21-59)	Moderate level of Nomophobia (60-99)	Severe Nomophobia (100-140)	
Age group	18-19* years	5.6%	5.6%	69.4%	19.4%	100.0%
	20-21 years	6.8%	10.2%	59.3%	23.7%	100.0%
	22-23 years		7.7%	76.9%	15.4%	100.0%
	24+ years			100.0%		100.0%
Total		4.5%	7.6%	68.9%	18.9%	100.0%



Bar Chart 4: Age group and Nomophobia Percentage Level

From the above data we can see that 44.7% of the respondents are between 20-21 years and only 8.3% respondents are above 24 years. In all age groups, moderate level of Nomophobia is the most dominant level. In the age group of 20-21 years there are 59.3% who are at the moderate level of Nomophobia while the percentage in 18-19 years and 22-23 years group is 69.4% and 76.9% respectively. There are 23.7% respondents are at severe level of Nomophobia from 20-21 years group while 19.4% and 15.4% are at the severe Nomophobia level at 18-19 years and 22-23 years respectively. All the students from 22-23 years age group are at moderate level of Nomophobia. Absence of Nomophobia is minor in all the age groups.

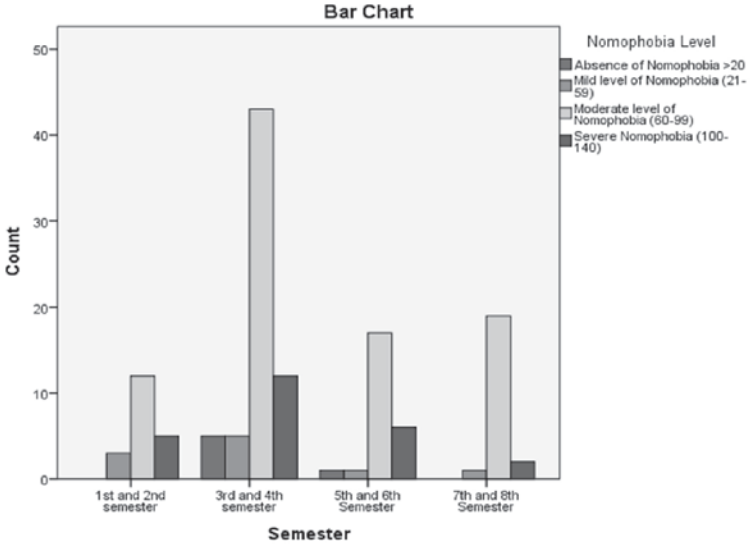
8.5. Semester and Nomophobia:

Table 5.1: Semester and Nomophobia level

		Total score in the survey				Total	
		Absence of Nomophobia (20)	Mild level of Nomophobia (21-59)	Moderate level of Nomophobia (60-99)	Severe Nomophobia (100-140)		%
Semester	1st and 2nd semester	0	3	12	5	20	15.2
	3rd and 4th semester	5	5	43	12	65	49.2
	5th and 6th Semester	1	1	17	6	25	18.9
	7th and 8th Semester	0	1	19	2	22	16.7
Total		6	10	91	25	132	100

Table 5.2: Semester and Nomophobia percentage level

		Total score in the survey				Total
		Absence of Nomophobia (20)	Mild level of Nomophobia (21-59)	Moderate level of Nomophobia (60-99)	Severe Nomophobia (100-140)	
Semester	1st and 2nd semester		15.0%	60.0%	25.0%	100.0%
	3rd and 4th semester	7.7%	7.7%	66.2%	18.5%	100.0%
	5th and 6th Semester	4.0%	4.0%	68.0%	24.0%	100.0%
	7th and 8th Semester		4.5%	86.4%	9.1%	100.0%
Total		4.5%	7.6%	68.9%	18.9%	100.0%



Bar Chart 5: Semester and Nomophobia Percentage Level

From the above data we can see that almost 50% of the respondents are studying in 3rd or 4th semester and only 15.2% respondents are in their 1st or 2nd semester. In all study level groups moderate level of Nomophobia is the most dominant level. There are around 25% students in both groups encompassing 1st and 2nd semester and 5th and 6th semester students who are at severe Nomophobia level. 86.4% students in the group 7th and 8th semester are at moderate level of Nomophobia and rest of the study groups are above 60%. Absence of Nomophobia is minor in all study duration groups.

9. Discussion on Findings

Analyzing the results above, the core findings of this research work are as follows:

According to the survey conducted on the students of Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), Nomophobia has been found at moderate level despite having noticeable mobile phone addiction among students. The results found 70% students with moderate level of Nomophobia (Table 1). The minimal percentage is 4.5 representing absence of Nomophobia and the severe level takes the second highest position with 18.9%.

According to the findings, age group has clear connection with the level of Nomophobia. As the sample consists of young people from one institution, here youngest adults (age group 18-19 and 20-21 years) were found with more nomophobic traits than senior adults (see table 4.2). Age group 20-21 years were found the most vulnerable ones with moderate level of Nomophobia. Again, they also have the highest percentage of severe Nomophobia compared to other age groups. This result has also been re-established with the 'Semester' variable where students studying in 2nd year (3rd and 4th semester) were found high in percentage. These students are mostly coming from the age group of 20-21 years, the vulnerable one.

Another mentionable thing is that, for the oldest nomophobic age group (24+), there is neither absence of Nomophobia nor the presence of the severe traits. They are the most stable age group found with only moderate level of Nomophobia.

Gender also has influential contribution on nomophobic behavior. In this research, men were found with more nomophobic traits at moderate level. Although having low percentage, women are in a more vulnerable situation than men in terms of severe level of Nomophobia. Against 9.9% men having severe nomophobic rate, women take the highest place with the percentage of 33.3 (Table 2.2). The marginal difference of moderate and severe Nomophobia for women is very low which shows women with moderate Nomophobia have a risk to enter into severe zone in no time.

According to the research, students with 5-8 years of mobile phone usage have higher percentage of Nomophobia at a moderate level. They also have higher percentage at severe level as well. Surprisingly new users (having usage for only 2-4 years) have less nomophobic traits despite having a new smartphone for the first time. This group also have higher percentage (8.5%) in absence of Nomophobia (Chart 3.2).

The results of this study met the research objective. The study found that students have moderate level of nomophobia and three variables have been identified (age, gender and duration of mobile phone usage) to have greater influence on them. One mentionable finding is that students with the age of 24+ are the most stable group having lower level of risk compared to other age groups. This can be a positive sign in nomophobic behavior as maturity is lessening the overall traits and tendencies to be highly addictive to smartphones. A future study on it may bring out the factors causing nomophobia to minimize the risk of such a trendy disorder.

10. Conclusion

As a gradually increasing fear of today's world, Nomophobia has been found having huge impact on students. The students of Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) have been found with moderate level among all three levels of Nomophobia. This is the major finding of this study which is also true in terms of three identified variables (age, gender and duration of mobile phone usage). Although being at this level is nothing to be satisfied about, they are thankfully not at the severe level. Rather, more attention should be given to this huge number of students (70%) as they have all the chance to jump onto the highest level, severe Nomophobia. Identifying the causing factors, effective strategic measurers should be taken to make students free from this increasing device obsession. Therefore, this study suggests more investigative research in this arena in the future.

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