



REVIEW ARTICLE / DERLEME YAZISI

Examination of Studies on Fear of Being Away from Cell Phone “Nomophobia”: A Bibliometric Analysis

Cep Telefonunda Uzak Kalma Korkusu “Nomofobi” ile İlgili Çalışmaların İncelenmesi: Bibliyometrik Bir Analiz

Emre Vadi Balcı¹ , Bünyamin Uzun² 

Abstract:

This study aims to examine the dissemination and thematic orientations of academic research on the concept of nomophobia—a form of dependence and fear associated with technological devices, particularly mobile phones. Accordingly, the primary objective of this study is to identify the developmental trajectory and research foci of scientific publications concerning nomophobia over the years. The study employs a quantitative bibliometric analysis, using data from the Web of Science (WoS) database. All studies indexed with the keyword “nomophobia” were examined, and a total of 472 academic publications were analyzed using bibliometric data. The findings reveal a remarkable increase in research on nomophobia, particularly in the last eight years (n = 456). At the country level, the highest number of publications was produced by researchers from Turkey, while Nottingham Trent University was identified as the most prolific institution in this field. Keyword analyses indicate that the concepts of “excessive smartphone use” and “behavioral addiction” have appeared only infrequently within nomophobia-related studies. The discussion highlights that research on nomophobia has predominantly focused on psychology, psychiatry, and education, while studies in the communication discipline—despite its high relevance to the topic—remain limited. In conclusion, this study reveals the developmental trends of the literature on nomophobia and provides a guiding framework for researchers to monitor existing trajectories and identify new research avenues. Future studies are recommended to examine, in greater depth, the psychosocial impacts of nomophobia across different cultural contexts and its connections to digital health policies.

Keywords: Nomophobia, Phone addiction, Smartphone, Phobia.

¹Usak University, Faculty of Communication, Department of New Media and Communication, Uşak, Türkiye.

²Yozgat Bozok University, Faculty of Communication, Department of New Media and Communication, Yozgat, Türkiye.

Address of Correspondence/Yazışma Adresi: Bünyamin Uzun, Yozgat Bozok University, Faculty of Communication, Erdoğan Akdağ Campus, 66000 Merkez, Yozgat, Türkiye, E-mail: uzunbnyamin17@gmail.com.

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Öz:

Bu çalışma, bireylerin teknolojik cihazlara ve özellikle mobil telefonlara yönelik bağımlılık ve fobilerinden biri olan nomofobi (cep telefonu kullanamama korkusu) kavramına ilişkin akademik araştırmaların yaygınlığını ve konu yönelimlerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Günümüzde hızla artan mobil cihaz kullanımı, bireylerin teknolojiyle olan etkileşim biçimlerini dönüştürmüş ve beraberinde yeni tür bağımlılıklar ile fobilerin ortaya çıkmasına neden olmuştur. Bu doğrultuda, çalışmanın temel amacı “nomofobi” konusuna ilişkin yapılan araştırmaların yaygınlığını ve konu dağılımlarını bibliyometrik açıdan incelemektir. Çalışmada nicel araştırma yöntemlerinden bibliyometrik analiz kullanılmış ve veri kaynağı olarak Web of Science (WoS) veritabanı tercih edilmiştir. Analiz kapsamında “nomophobia” anahtar kelimesiyle dizinlenen tüm çalışmalar incelenmiş, toplam 472 akademik yayının bibliyometrik verileri değerlendirilmiştir. Elde edilen bulgular, nomofobiye ilişkin çalışmaların özellikle son sekiz yılda (n=456) görünür bir artış gösterdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Ülke bazında en fazla yayının Türkiye’den araştırmacılar tarafından üretildiği, en çok yayın yapan kurumun ise Nottingham Trent University olduğu belirlenmiştir. Anahtar kelime analizleri, nomofobi çalışmalarında nadiren “aşırı akıllı telefon kullanımı” ve “davranışsal bağımlılık” kavramlarının ön plana çıktığını göstermektedir. Nomofobi araştırmalarının özellikle psikoloji, psikiyatri ve eğitim alanlarında yoğunlaştığı; ancak konu ile ilişkisi yüksek olan iletişim alanında oldukça az çalışmanın bulunduğu saptanmıştır. Buna ek olarak, kültürel boyutlarının yeterince incelenmediği belirtilmektedir. Bu durum, gelecekteki araştırmalar için disiplinlerarası yaklaşımların gerekliliğini ortaya koymaktadır. Sonuç olarak, çalışma nomofobiye yönelik literatürün gelişim yönelimlerini ortaya koymakta, araştırmacılara bu alandaki eğilimleri izleme ve yeni araştırma konuları belirleme konusunda yol gösterici bir çerçeve sunmaktadır. Gelecek çalışmalarda, özellikle farklı kültürel bağlamlarda nomofobinin psikososyal etkilerinin ve dijital sağlık politikalarıyla ilişkilerinin daha derinlemesine incelenmesi önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Nomofobi, Telefon bağımlılığı, Akıllı telefon, Fobi.

Introduction

Technological advancements and the devices they produce have significantly transformed both individuals’ daily lives and their behavioral patterns. Mobile phones, initially designed to facilitate interpersonal communication, have undergone substantial technological evolution and now offer a wide range of functions. As a result, they have become technological devices that profoundly influence human life. Today, mobile phones function as an integral part of everyday life (Kuyucu, 2017; Tuco, Castro-Diaz, Soriano-Moreno, & Benites-Zapata, 2023).

With mobile phones, individuals can perform a wide array of activities beyond basic communication, including sending and receiving emails, shopping online, navigating, taking photos or videos, accessing social networking platforms, engaging in virtual socialization, and conducting banking transactions. According to King et al. (2014), the prominent role of smartphones in daily life can be attributed to their ability to facilitate communication technologies through flexibility, mobility, and personalization. Despite these advantages, frequent smartphone use has also given rise to various problems, most notably addiction. Consequently, individuals tend to use mobile phones intensively for both daily necessities and dependency-related behaviors, leading to a fear of being unable to use them (Ergün, 2025; Griffiths, 2000; Kuss, Griffiths, & Pontes, 2017). In this study, the concept of “nomophobia,” defined as the fear of being without or unable to use a mobile phone, is examined.

Nomophobia, which has shown an increasing prevalence in society—particularly among young people—is defined as the fear of being without a smartphone. The term is derived from the English words “no,” “mobile phone,” and “phobia.” Nomophobia is conceptualized through four components: fear of being unable to communicate via a smartphone, fear of losing connectivity, fear of being unable to access information, and fear of losing the convenience provided by smartphones (Copaja-Corzo, Aragón-Ayala, Taype-Rondan, & Nomotest-Group, 2022;

King et al., 2014; Yildirim & Correia, 2015). The concept is generally used to describe users’ dependence on smartphones and is derived from the acronym for “no mobile phone phobia.”

Nomophobia was first identified in 2008 during a field study conducted in the United Kingdom on mobile phone use and was defined as the fear of losing mobile phone communication (Yildirim, 2014; Fidancı, Aksoy, & Ayhan Başer, 2022). Following this initial definition, the phenomenon of nomophobia gained momentum, fueled by the increasing convenience smartphones offered. This trend became particularly pronounced after the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, lockdown measures and the transition to online education significantly increased students’ reliance on smartphones. Additionally, smartphones became the primary source of entertainment and social engagement, leading to heightened levels of phone dependency and nomophobia among young people and students (Fidancı et al., 2022; Shahzad et al., 2021). Today, the use of smart devices occupies a central position in daily life, both as a form of dependency and as a source of phobic anxiety. Individuals with nomophobia exhibit several common behavioral patterns.

Individuals experiencing nomophobia report intense anxiety in situations such as losing their smartphone, leaving home without it, battery depletion, network connectivity issues, or loss of internet access. Moreover, when separated from their phones, they often feel disconnected from family and friends and experience a fear of missing out (FOMO) on others’ digital activities (Wibowo & Safaria, 2025). In an effort to avoid nomophobia, individuals may adopt behaviors such as owning multiple mobile devices, keeping them charged, and avoiding locations without internet connectivity. Additionally, spending substantial amounts of money on

smartphone use is considered a symptom of nomophobia (Bragazzi & Del Puente, 2014; Sayan Karahan, 2023; Vagka, Gnardellis, Lagiou, & Notara, 2023). These behaviors indicate that individuals with nomophobia experience elevated levels of anxiety and chronic stress.

As illustrated, nomophobia symptoms are closely associated with various psychological issues experienced or anticipated by individuals. Nomophobia may contribute to psychological problems such as anxiety disorders, general anxiety, and addiction. Furthermore, research suggests a bidirectional relationship between nomophobia and conditions such as loneliness and depression, whereby each may exacerbate the other. Beyond psychological consequences, nomophobia may also lead to physical health problems, including visual impairment, tissue damage in the hands (particularly fingers), and neck and back disorders. Additionally, smartphone use has been linked to an increased risk of traffic accidents, affecting both drivers and pedestrians, some of which can be serious or fatal (Cazzulino et al., 2013; Nandita & Rajan, 2025; Xie, Szeto, & Dai, 2017).

The primary objective of this study is to examine the prevalence and thematic distribution of research on “nomophobia” from a bibliometric perspective. Using a co-word analysis approach, the study aims to identify the main themes addressed in books, book chapters, journal articles, and conference proceedings on nomophobia and to reveal gaps and underexplored areas in the literature. The systematically compiled body of research is expected to provide guidance for future studies in the field. By presenting an overview of the literature, this study identifies key trends and focal areas in nomophobia research. The statistical findings are expected to contribute to more efficient and targeted planning for future research endeavors. Ultimately, understanding the impact of nomophobia on human life and presenting a comprehensive portrait of the existing literature constitute the study's core significance.

Method

In this study, a quantitative bibliometric analysis method was employed, as it is a widely used technique that provides a systematic, transparent, and comprehensive overview of a specific research field (Saggese, Sarto, & Cuccurullo, 2016). Bibliometric analysis focuses on the quantitative characteristics of publications within a given research domain and facilitates descriptive assessments based on publication data. Through this method, large-scale datasets can be analyzed in detail, allowing for an in-depth evaluation of changes over time and the identification of core trends within a particular field.

Bibliometric analysis enables the profiling of a research domain using quantitative indicators such as publication output, publication years, countries, universities, disciplines, keywords, citation counts, most-cited studies, and leading authors. Furthermore, the strength and structure of relationships among publications or within a given dataset can be described, analyzed, and visualized

through network maps generated via bibliometric techniques (Van Eck & Waltman, 2014; Wallin, 2005).

In the context of this study, the bibliometric analysis of research on “nomophobia”—a phenomenon increasingly recognized as both a behavioral addiction and a phobia in contemporary society—aims to identify which research findings and strategies may be utilized by policymakers, legislators, and professionals in fields such as health and education to address this issue more effectively. In addition, the study seeks to provide a valuable reference for researchers interested in nomophobia and digital device or network dependency by guiding future research directions. From this perspective, the importance of such an analysis lies in its potential to contribute to existing literature, identify research gaps, and support the development of more effective policies and intervention strategies.

Within the scope of this study, academic publications addressing the concept of “nomophobia,” a significant contemporary social issue, were analyzed. A search was conducted in the Web of Science (WoS) database—one of the world's most comprehensive and reputable academic databases—using the keyword “nomophobia.” All studies on fear of being unable to use a mobile phone retrieved through this search were included in the analysis. Since the study utilized open-access secondary data and did not involve human or animal subjects, ethical committee approval was not required. All publications obtained through the keyword search “nomophobia” were included in the dataset. Accordingly, journal articles, books, book chapters, and conference proceedings indexed in WoS were examined. The search identified 472 publications on nomophobia in the WoS database.

Data Processing and Analytical Tools

Bibliometric data on nomophobia from the WoS database were exported and analyzed in VOSviewer. VOSviewer is widely used in bibliometric studies to construct network maps and visualize relationships among publications. In this regard, the software facilitates the bibliometric processing of datasets, the generation of meaningful visual representations, and the mapping of relationships between variables (Van Eck & Waltman, 2017).

Using VOSviewer, the analyzed studies were classified according to authors, journals, countries, universities, citations, and co-occurring keywords. The resulting data were visualized through mapping techniques, and network maps were generated to illustrate relational structures within the literature. Additionally, information regarding publication years, research areas, and WoS index categories of the analyzed studies was obtained from the “Analyze Results” section of the WoS database.

Findings

A total of 472 publications indexed in the WoS database and containing the keyword “nomophobia” were examined in this study. The majority of the analyzed publications consisted of research articles (n = 389). Overall, 442 publications were journal articles, 25 were conference proceedings, and 1

related to communication processes (Bhattacharya, Bashar, Srivastava, & Singh, 2019; Fidancı, Aksoy, & Ayhan Başer, 2022; Yildirim, 2014; Yildirim & Correia, 2015).

The findings further indicate that nomophobia constitutes a relatively new area of research. Although the first academic study on nomophobia was published in 2010, scholarly interest in the field appears to have intensified primarily after 2020. The emergence of research in 2010 is expected, as the widespread adoption of smartphones significantly altered individuals' mobile phone usage habits. Consequently, mobile phone addiction and the fear of being without one began to emerge (Kuss, Griffiths, & Pontes, 2017; Xie, Szeto, & Dai, 2017; Yildirim & Correia, 2015). In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic is believed to have contributed to an increase in both nomophobic behaviors and related academic research. During the pandemic, individuals reportedly relied more heavily on their mobile phones and experienced heightened anxiety about disconnection from these devices (Fidancı, Aksoy, & Ayhan Başer, 2022; Mohamed & Shaban, 2025; Shahzad, Shahzad, Anwer, Khader, Mnan, Akhtar & Akhtar, 2021).

Of the 472 nomophobia-related studies analyzed, 97 were published by researchers based in Türkiye and received a total of 1,167 citations. In comparison, researchers from the United States published 56 studies that collectively received 1,980 citations, while 34 studies authored by researchers from the United Kingdom received 1,613 citations. Accordingly, researchers from the United States and the United Kingdom exhibit stronger network links within the citation network. Although studies from Türkiye rank third in overall citation volume, an examination of the relationship between publication output and citation impact suggests that research from Türkiye remains relatively less prominent. Therefore, it would not be inaccurate to argue that studies produced in Türkiye tend to remain in the background in terms of global academic visibility. This finding underscores the importance of international collaboration and visibility to enhance recognition and citation impact. Moreover, the relatively low citation rates indicate a need for greater emphasis on methodological quality, theoretical contribution, and research scope to strengthen scientific impact (Ayhan, Demir, & Özkeçeci, 2025; Janatolmakan, Karampour, Rezaeian, & Khatony, 2024). This situation does not appear to be associated with language barriers, as only two of the analyzed studies were published in Turkish. Consequently, it can be argued that increasing international collaboration and diversifying theoretical and methodological approaches may help produce more influential research.

To identify the thematic focus of the literature, a co-word analysis was conducted. Unsurprisingly, the most frequently used keywords were "nomophobia" and "smartphone". An examination of the primary research foci reveals that a substantial proportion of studies focus

on levels of nomophobia among students and young people. Additionally, mobile phone or device addiction emerges as the second major focus within the nomophobia literature. However, among the least frequently used keywords—and thus the least explored research areas—are concepts such as “excessive smartphone use” and “behavioral addiction.” Focusing on infrequently used keywords helps identify gaps in the research field. The concept of behavioral addiction is particularly relevant because it is associated with everyday behavioral patterns and lifestyle impacts (Enez & Yalçınkaya Alkar, 2024; Sayan Karahan, 2022; Ayakdaş Dağlı & Yüyen, 2024). Considering the behavioral effects of nomophobia and its restrictive influence on daily life, it is reasonable to expect nomophobia to be evaluated more extensively within the framework of behavioral addiction.

This study is limited to research on nomophobia indexed in the Web of Science database. Furthermore, studies published after January 2025 fall outside the scope of this research. Accordingly, the analysis is confined to WoS-indexed publications available through 2025, while studies beyond this timeframe are excluded. Given the role of technological devices in daily life—both as sources of dependency and fear—it is expected that mobile phone use will continue to be the subject of extensive academic inquiry. Fear of being unable to use a mobile phone and problematic smartphone use represent critical issues that warrant investigation across multiple contexts. If these phenomena are approached as forms of addiction or behavioral problems, future studies may focus on diagnostic and therapeutic frameworks. Additionally, smartphone use may be examined within the scope of communication sciences, as the dependency in question arises directly from communication technologies and mediated forms of interaction. Future research may address nomophobia across various contexts, particularly by focusing on underrepresented keywords identified in this study.

Declarations

Ethics Committee Approval and Consent to Participate

Not applicable.

Consent for Publication

Not applicable.

Availability of Data and Materials

Not applicable.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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Authors' Contributions

BU contributed to the investigation and structuring of the literature, while EVB contributed to the study's research design and methodological framework. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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