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# The Influence of Interpersonal Communication on Nomophobia in Married Couples

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# ABSTRACT

The term used to describe an individual's dependence on smartphones is called no-mobile phone phobia (nomophobia), which refers to the fear of being disconnected from the digital world. One of the causes of nomophobia is the high need for communication. Individuals who spend a lot of time on virtual communication have a reason to escape from reallife social relationships. Individuals who fail to develop interpersonal intelligence will experience obstacles in their social lives. This study aims to explore the influence of interpersonal communication on nomophobia among married couples. The research design used is a non-experimental quantitative correlational design. The research instruments used are the NMP-Q Likert scale and the MCI scale. The study involves a total of 39 subjects. The analysis results show that 69.5% of the respondents experience a moderate level of nomophobia, while 35.9% experience a high level of nomophobia. A positive influence between interpersonal communication and nomophobia among married couples is found, thus rejecting the hypothesis.

**Keywords**: Interpersonal Communication, Married Couples, Nomophobia

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#### INTRODUCTION

The use of smartphones among individuals has surpassed the provision of interpersonal communication today, as individuals are constantly present in the online environment with various activities and features available (Chatzidakis et al., 2021). The

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dependence of individuals on smartphones is referred to as no-mobile phone phobia (nomophobia), which is the fear of being disconnected from the digital world (Wasserman et al., 2020). Bragazzi and Del Puente also mentioned that nomophobia is a disorder experienced by the digital society, manifested by discomfort, anxiety, irritability, and distress when a person cannot access their mobile phone. Dalbudak et al (Kannan & Vimalkumar, 2021). elaborated that nomophobia is considered a modern disorder, characterized by discomfort and anxiety due to the unavailability of smartphones, computers, or other virtual communication devices.

The first study on nomophobia was conducted by Yildirim and Correia (2015), where research was conducted on employees in a security company in the UK. The results showed an increase in the prevalence of nomophobia from 53% to 66% (González & Peltz, 2021). This means that more people are suffering from nomophobia each year, and this phenomenon is unavoidable.

The phenomenon of nomophobia is now evident in Indonesia, as revealed in a systematic review conducted by Tuco Kimberly et al, which found that Indonesia has the highest prevalence of severe nomophobia (León-Mejía et al., 2020). This is consistent with the data showing that Indonesia is the fourth most active smartphone user in the world after China, India, and the United States, with social media usage and online gaming being popular activities among the Indonesian population.

Nomophobia can affect the attitudes, lifestyle, and interactions between married couples (Sun et al., 2020). This can be observed from the quality and quantity of communication, which is key to successful relationships, especially in marriage. Good communication with a spouse is characterized by a sense of comfort in sharing and receiving emotional and cognitive information (Zhao et al., 2019). Harmonious marriages are marked by good communication between partners. Good communication between partners is necessary to build, maintain, and strengthen relationships, as well as to achieve the goal of a harmonious married life.

In response to this phenomenon, interpersonal communication within marital relationships needs to be built and conveyed effectively. Through good interpersonal communication, spouses can create a space to share their concerns and be open with each other (Ni et al., 2020). DeVito (2014) explains that interpersonal communication skills are face-to-face communication skills between two or more individuals, involving various effects, feedback, and involving attitudes of honesty, responsibility, and feelings towards the messages conveyed during the communication process.

Interpersonal communication serves as a means to initiate, negotiate, maintain, and terminate relationships (Sun et al., 2020). Interpersonal skills are essential in life because humans fundamentally cannot live alone (Leuzinger-Bohleber et al., 2019). Many activities in life are related to others. Individuals who fail to develop interpersonal intelligence will face obstacles in their social world. Often, interpersonal conflicts also hinder individuals from developing their social world maturely (Leuzinger-Bohleber et al., 2019). As a result, individuals can feel lonely, worthless, and tend to isolate themselves, ultimately leading to depression and a loss of meaning in life.

As social beings, individuals need others to fulfill their social needs (Habeebullah et al., 2021). Through social interactions, they can fulfill their needs for attention, affection, and love (Bacmeister et al., 2019). Therefore, supportive partners and social environments become determinants of an individual's psychological maturity in the future (Sun et al., 2020). Olson et al. (2010) state that the majority of married couples feel satisfied with their relationship because they have successful communication (Serrano-Ripoll et al., 2020). This ability allows them to understand and respond to the desires and feelings of their partners (Ren et al., 2021). When differences or problems arise, they can address the situation through open communication with each other (Olson, Defrain, and Skogrand 2010).

Previous studies have found that an individual's increased interpersonal problemsolving skills are associated with a decrease in nomophobia (He et al., 2019). This is also consistent with the research by Amalia et al (2018) that smartphones can hinder marital interactions, where spouses engage in smartphone use during conversations, leading to neglect and even a complete lack of communication (Amalia, Moita, and Tawulo 2018). Ultimately, smartphones, initially designed to facilitate communication, become a cause of disharmony in relationships.

When it comes to social interaction anxiety and nomophobia (Anshari, Alas, and Sulaiman 2019; Kaur et al. 2021), it is found that highly socially anxious individuals prefer virtual relationships over face-to-face interactions to avoid discomfort and anxiety. From this perspective, the unavailability of access to a phone is seen as a source of anxiety for individuals with high social interaction anxiety because smartphone use serves as a coping strategy to alleviate their social discomfort (Bashiri et al., 2020). This also addresses the limitations of Dalbudak et al.'s (2020) research, which predicted that individuals with good social connections who don't feel lonely would have low levels of nomophobia and reduced dependence on technology devices.

Anxiety in social interaction and poor emotional management skills indirectly affect nomophobia through the role of intolerance of uncertainty, where attachment and dependence on smartphones increase as a way to eliminate unpleasant feelings (Litz & Kerig, 2019). In this context, interpersonal communication is crucial for an individual's growth, especially for married couples, to achieve a harmonious married life, and it is also one of the criteria for measuring mental health (Pfefferbaum & North, 2020). However, in reality, many individuals lack good interpersonal skills and often face unresolved issues, which can seriously affect their lives.

Based on the above explanation, several studies have been conducted to determine the causes of nomophobia (Liu et al., 2022). In this study, the researchers are interested in exploring the individual's psychosocial factors associated with nomophobia, specifically investigating whether interpersonal communication within married couples has an influence on nomophobia (Leng et al., 2021). Therefore, the aim of this research is to investigate the influence of interpersonal communication on nomophobia.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## Variables or concepts studied

Nomophobia is a form of tendency or dependency due to frequent smartphone use that leads to the emergence of social problems in individuals (Farchakh et al., 2021), which can be seen through withdrawal and issues in self-functioning both in their personal and social environments.

Interpersonal communication is a process in which one person conveys a message to the message receiver (Gonçalves et al., 2020), who can be an individual or a small group of people, with various consequences and opportunities for instant feedback.

Individuals who spend a lot of time engaging in virtual communication have reasons to escape from real-life social relationships (Jilisha et al., 2019). These reasons allow them to reduce personal anxiety, conflicts, and create a sense of security (Kaviani et al., 2020). At this point, it can be said that they are making an effort to avoid conflict in communication and protect their personal feelings (Rodríguez-García et al., 2020). Therefore, the individual's interpersonal communication skills play a role in influencing their dependence on virtual communication, which in turn leads to nomophobia.

## Research subject

The subjects in this study are married couples, both husbands and wives. The sampling technique used is purposive random sampling. This technique is one of the techniques that determine specific characteristics that match the intended criteria in order to answer the research questions (Sugiyono 2010).

## Research Instruments

The variable of Nomophobia is measured using The Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q) developed by Yildirim and Correia, which consists of four factors: 1) inability to access information, 2) loss of connectedness, 3) inability to communicate, and 4) giving up convenience. The questionnaire comprises a total of 20 favorable statements/items. The scores obtained from this scale indicate the level of nomophobic behavior exhibited by the student (Yildirim and Correia 2015).

For the variable of interpersonal communication in this study, the Marital Communication Inventory (MCI) by Bienvenu (1971) is used (Bienvenu 1970). It includes five aspects: 1) self-concept, 2) ability, 3) experience, 4) emotional skills, and 5) self-disclosure. The scale consists of 19 statements/items, with 9 being favorable and 10 being unfavorable. Both scales used in this research are in the form of likert scales with four response options ranging from strongly agree (sa), agree (a), disagree (d), and strongly disagree (sd).

# Research design

This research uses quantitative research which is based on the influence between variables and is associated with existing theory. This research design uses a correlational study that discusses the relationship between two or more variables (Sugiyono 2010). This

research was conducted to determine the effect of interpersonal communication on nomophobia in married couples. Participants in this study were 39 married couples in Asahan district, North Sumatera.

#### Data Collection Procedures

The initial step in this procedure is to prepare the research instrument. After that, the implementation phase is carried out by providing the research instrument to the predetermined subjects using the purposive sampling method, with the requirement that the subjects are married couples who are already married and use smartphones. The researcher will distribute the research instrument to the subjects through Google Forms. The final stage is data analysis, which is conducted after all the data and research instruments have been collected, and the data analysis will be carried out according to the established method.

## Data analysis technique

The researcher utilized the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 to conduct a basic linear regression analysis. The purpose of regression analysis is to investigate the connection between a dependent variable and one or multiple independent variables. In this research, the researcher employed regression analysis to assess the impact of interpersonal communication on nomophobia.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Mean & Standard Deviation (N = 39)

Variables	Mean	SD Empiric	Mean	SD Hipotetic
	<b>Empiric</b>		Hipotetic	
Nomophobia	56.82	4.543	50	10
Interpersosal	54.87	9.902	47.5	9.5
Communication				

Table. 2 Result of Regression Analysis

Interfaith Influence Variables	β	P
Interpersonal Communication → Nomophobia	1.413	0.000

Tabel 3. Table Category Nomophobia

Category	Frequency	Percent
Low	1	2.6
Medium	24	61.5
High	14	35.9

The hypothesis analysis results indicate that interpersonal communication has a significant influence on Nomophobia (P = 0.000;  $\beta = 1.413$ ). Thus, it can be concluded that the hypothesis in this study was rejected, which means that interpersonal

communication affects Nomophobia, but with a positive influence. This positive influence suggests that a high level of interpersonal communication also impacts a high level of Nomophobia in married couples. Furthermore, based on Table 3, it was found that the level of nomophobia among the 39 respondents in this study was predominantly at a moderate level, with 61.5% falling under the moderate category, 35.9% in the high category, and 2.6% in the low category.

This study aims to examine the influence of interpersonal communication on nomophobia among married couples. The findings of this research differ from previous studies that found a decrease in nomophobia with increased interpersonal communication or interpersonal problem-solving skills (Karaoglan Yilmaz et al. 2022). Similar results were also found in a study by Amalia et al. (2018) which showed that smartphones can hinder the interaction between married couples. This can be observed when spouses are having a conversation and one or both of them are engaged with their smartphones, resulting in neglect or even a complete lack of communication between them (Amalia et al. 2018). Ultimately, smartphones, which were initially designed to facilitate communication, become a cause of disharmony in relationships.

These findings are interesting because they differ from previous research, portraying a newer condition or trend regarding the influence of interpersonal communication on nomophobia. Technological advancements and changes in smartphone usage may have impacted this relationship.

Previous studies indicated a negative relationship between interpersonal communication and nomophobia, suggesting that low interpersonal communication leads to high levels of nomophobia. However, this study found different results. As shown in Table 1 above, even high levels of interpersonal communication can lead to high levels of nomophobia. The study also found that the categorized level of nomophobia among subjects was predominantly moderate, with 61.5% of participants at a moderate level and 35.9% at a high level.

These findings are supported by a study by Diannitami et al. (2020), which found no relationship between social interaction and the occurrence of nomophobia among students in Semarang. It is important to note that social interaction here refers to contact or reciprocal relationships and responses between individuals, activities that enable a relationship between individuals and others, which is then actualized through communication practices. From this, it can be concluded that social interaction is no longer a determining factor in experiencing nomophobia (Diannitami, Febriana, and Rochmawati 2020).

The popularity of smartphones today is due to the various features and functions they offer. With smartphones, we can perform various daily tasks in one device. It is not limited to phone calls and text messages; smartphones enable us to check and send emails, schedule appointments, access the internet, shop online, use social media, search for information, play games, and enjoy other forms of entertainment (Park and Lee 2014). With these extensive capabilities, even individuals with good interpersonal

communication skills can experience nomophobia due to the dependence and benefits provided by smartphones.

### **CONCLUSION**

The The conclusion of this study is the presence of contrasting findings compared to previous research regarding the impact of interpersonal communication on nomophobia among married couples. This study found that, despite high levels of interpersonal communication, it can still have a significant influence on high levels of nomophobia. This indicates that the use of smartphones in marital relationships can disrupt interaction and lead to disharmony. These findings are interesting as they depict a newer trend in the influence of interpersonal communication on nomophobia, potentially influenced by technological advancements and changes in smartphone usage. The results of this study are also consistent with other research indicating that social interaction is no longer a determining factor in experiencing nomophobia.

The current popularity of smartphones is due to the various features and functions they offer. Even individuals with good interpersonal communication skills remain susceptible to experiencing nomophobia due to dependence and the benefits provided by smartphones. Therefore, it is important to understand the negative implications that excessive smartphone usage can have on interpersonal relationships, especially within the context of married couples.

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