

Article

Influence of *Nomophobia* on Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Students' Academic Activities

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Abstract: *Nomophobia*, which means “no mobile phone phobia,” is the fear and anxiety of being without a mobile phone or disconnected from connectivity like no signal, low battery, and low internet. Studies have shown that addiction to the smart phone among students is a global issue with adverse impact on sleep, mental health, and academics due to poor concentration, and procrastination. Whether *nomophobia* affects academic activities among students of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU) is yet to be ascertained. Four objectives formulated to guide the study are: to ascertain the level of *nomophobia* experienced by COOU students, discover whether students in a particular course of study are more prone to *nomophobia*, examine the specific Smartphone activities that aggravate *nomophobia*, and evaluate how *nomophobia* affects students' academic activities. The Technological Determinism Theory was used as theoretical framework for the study. The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method was utilized to study 66 students who admitted they experience *nomophobia*; they were selected using purposive sampling technique. The study found that COOU students were experiencing high level of *nomophobia*; that course of study does not affect *nomophobia*; that the specific activities aggravating *nomophobia* are frequent checking of notifications and messages, too much social media exposure, and internet browsing and calls for extended periods, and that *nomophobia* affects their academic activities like poor study habits, attending lectures late, and poor concentration in class due to sleep disturbances, anxiety and stress. The study therefore recommends awareness creation across schools on the harmful effects of *nomophobia* and withdrawal strategies.

Keywords: Influence, *Nomophobia*, Academic activities, Smartphone.

Introduction

Digital technologies have significantly changed the lives of individuals by facilitating network access, communication, collaboration, and online education. For many, the Smartphone has become a necessity in life and their impact on daily activities has been substantial mostly among young people. However, researchers have maintained that Smartphone could lead to potentially dangerous antisocial and addictive behaviour (Al-Mamun, *et al.*, 2023). Excessive and problematic cell phone

use leads to *nomophobia* which is referred to as the fear of being without a mobile phone, and some have claimed that this is a new type of psychiatric disorder (Rodríguez-García, *et al.*, 2020).

The proliferation of the Smartphone technology has dramatically altered how individuals communicate and engage with their surroundings. Currently, the Smartphone has inevitably become a part of modern life (Yilmaz, *et al.*, 2023) with plenty of valuable and convenient features such as social media, apps, games, GPS, live streams, online courses, entertainment, training, psychological treatment, and more (Yilmaz, *et al.*, 2023). Globally, psychological problems related to overusing Smartphone have been reported, as many victims especially in America have symptoms of panic if their phone battery is below 20%, nearly half of them admit that they could not live without their Smartphone and feel addicted to it (Lee & Kim, 2022; Nguyen, *et al.*, 2024). This dependence has resulted in the emergence of a new form of phobia, referred to as *nomophobia*, or the fear of being without one's mobile phone. Smartphone use in education can provide numerous benefits, for instance: access to educational resources, communication with classmates, and the ability to complete assignments from any location and at any time (Lee & Kim, 2022).

However, excessive use of the Smartphone can also have detrimental effects on human life, including distractions, reduced attention, increased procrastination, and serious health issues that can reduce academic performance. Many studies indicate that people who overuse the Smartphone may experience various risks of problems, including “technostress,” “ring anxiety,” phantom vibration syndrome, depression, loneliness, sleep disturbance and *nomophobia* (Gao, *et al.*, 2017; Mahapatra, 2019; Nguyen, *et al.*, 2024). *Nomophobia*, NO MO(bile) PHO(ne) (pho)BIA, is a condition identified by an excessive and irrational fear of being separated from one's mobile phone, experiencing a loss of mobile network connectivity, or having an insufficient amount of battery or airtime (Gegin, *et al.*, 2018; Yilmaz, *et al.*, 2023). This particular phobia is considered a situational fear, as it arises from the absence of mobile phone access in difficult or uncomfortable situations faced by users of such gadgets (Yilmaz, *et al.*, 2023).

In addition, individuals with *nomophobia* may rely on their mobile devices to avoid social interactions, finding it more comfortable, safer, and even more successful than interacting with the physical world (Gegin, *et al.*, 2018). Typical signs of *nomophobia* could include the overuse of the Smartphone, owning multiple devices, regularly carrying a mobile charger, and experiencing anxiety when unexpectedly unable to use a phone (Qutishat, *et al.*, 2020). There is evidence showing that *nomophobia* is prevalent among students attending schools, with the rate varying from 18.5 to 73% (Saraswathi & Williams, 2019; Nguyen, *et al.*, 2024), with determinants identified as age, gender, self-image, self-esteem, and personality (Quishat, *et al.*, 2020). *Nomophobia* has been a growing issue worldwide in recent years and has been associated with a number of psychological and behavioral health-related problems (Al-Mamun, *et al.*, 2023). In school settings, *nomophobia* poses significant challenges to students' learning and daily life. However, there is a scarcity of studies on *nomophobia* in Nigeria (Chen, *et al.*, 2025).

Just like students in other parts of the world, Nigerian students also experience prolonged Smartphone use resulting to *nomophobia*. Studies exploring the Nigerian students and how *nomophobia* affects their academic life are limited. This study therefore, aims to bridge this knowledge gap by examining the influence of *nomophobia* on COOU students' academic activities. Understanding the influence of *nomophobia* on education attainment in Nigeria is essential for devising interventions that promote responsible and beneficial Smartphone practices.

Statement of the Problem

The relationship between the use of the Smartphone, *nomophobia*, and academic achievement is a complex phenomenon that has garnered increased attention in recent years, revealing a complex interplay among these variables. The high frequency of the use of the Smartphone can increase the risk of *nomophobia* (Buctot, *et al.*, 2020; Rodríguez-García, *et al.*, 2020). With the inevitable and excessive use of the Smartphone, the risk of having *nomophobia* has become severe. Therefore, understanding the correlation between the Smartphone use and *nomophobia* is crucial, especially among students, for the educators and parents to checkmate the use of the Smartphone among their children (Nguyen, *et al.*, 2023). The influence of the use of the Smartphone on academic achievement

has been the subject of considerable scrutiny, with an accumulating body of research indicating that excessive engagement with these devices might undermine students' educational outcomes. Notably, the excessive Smartphone use can lead to distractions, diminished attention spans, and heightened procrastination, as elucidated by Rosen, *et al.*, cited in Buctot, *et al.* (2020).

Beyond the mere duration while using the Smartphone, the psychological dependence on these devices, including phenomena such as *nomophobia*, is also implicated in academics. *Nomophobia*, in particular, has been linked to adverse educational outcomes, which demonstrate its adverse effects on attention, time management, and motivation, consequently leading to poorer academic performance (Berdida & Gaviola, 2023). The extreme engagement with the Smartphone can impede academic pursuits, as established in studies among medical students in Saudi Arabia, where *nomophobia* gave room to diminished academic success (Al-Mamun, *et al.*, 2023). To the best of this researcher's knowledge, there is no study ascertaining whether *nomophobia* affects academic activities among COOU students in Igbariam campus. It is this yawning gap that the present study set out to fill.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives that guided the study are as follows:

- To ascertain the extent of *nomophobia* experienced by COOU students.
- To ascertain whether COOU students in a particular course of study are more prone to *nomophobia*.
- To determine the Smartphone activities that aggravate *nomophobia* among the respondents.
- To find out the influence of *nomophobia* on COOU students' academic activities.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study will provide reliable information to education agencies, governments and private establishments on how excessive use of the Smartphone affects Nigerian students' academic activities. This will help in the establishment of policies and programmes towards addressing the challenge in schools. Understanding how *nomophobia* affects students in Nigeria is very essential and the government and private schools at every level can make use of this information for planning on awareness creation among students on the harmful effects of the excessive use of the Smartphone. This study is also very important to students, researchers and scholars in communication and related disciplines as the findings contribute to existing literature on how excessive use of the Smartphone and the fear of not being with a phone influence students in Nigeria. Evidence from available literature indicates the shortage of studies of this nature, especially how *nomophobia* affects academic activities among COOU students. Most studies on this issue were done in the Western world, and given the obvious dissimilarities in the socio-political, environmental and cultural settings of Western societies and Nigeria, it becomes necessary to undertake the study. There is every need for literature from a local study like this on assessment of *nomophobia* influence on COOU students' academic activities.

Theoretical Framework

This work was anchored on Technological Determinism Theory. The theory suggests that technology is the primary driver of societal change and development, shaping how individuals think, feel, and act. It suggests that technology shapes and alters certain things about behaviour and society for instance people's way of thinking and acting, their way of maintaining interpersonal relationships, including their values, and the way they learn (Mezentsev, 2020). The technological determinism theory, developed by Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian Communication Scholar in 1962, posits that technology determines the trend of events in the society. Technological determinism as a concept suggests that new technologies in communication would soon determine social changes, turning the world into a global village (Nwodu, 2017; Griffin, Ledbetter & Sparks, 2022). The premise of this theory suggests that, given the emergence of the internet, its introduction and relevance in educating and informing people, there is bound to be an impact in the practice of journalism and the overall environment. The concept of technological determinism has evolved to primarily focus on modern

digital and automated technologies, yet the fundamental belief that technology influences cultural evolution dates back to ancient practices, such as weapon crafting (Ungvarsky, 2024).

The proponents of the theory argue that society is influenced and shaped by technological development. It has to adjust and adapt to new technologies and innovations. The negative consequences of the technological development are the result of poor use by individuals, not of the very nature of technology (Hauer, 2017). Society is modeled by the technical change which is created by society. The theory is a technology-led theory of social change. For instance, both radio and television had different influence on the society when they were invented, and as technology changes, so does society (Agbanu, 2013). In today's dynamic world, evolving technological developments, including the emergence of the internet, are impacting society in diverse ways; it provides a perspective proposed by technological determinists, that technology is the prime mover in every society (Osazee-Odia, 2016; Mezentsev, 2020). McLuhan explains that the way the people live is a function of the way they process information and that people's perception of the world is determined by the dominant medium of any age (Agbanu 2013; Nwodu, 2017).

This theory is considered appropriate for this study since *nomophobia* is primarily caused by technological advancement leading to the invention of the Smartphone. Many people in Nigeria, including students, make use of the mobile phone for communication and they are also exposed to the internet which is another major technological breakthrough in the digital age. Since technological determinism insists that technology drives people's life, it is possible that this is the reason why people are excessively exposed to their Smartphone causing *nomophobia*. Their smart phones have become part of their daily life and the technology is determining how they live. This theory could help explain the influence of *nomophobia* on academic activities among COOU students.

The Review

Emerging Phenomenon of *Nomophobia* among Young Adults

Nomophobia refers to the worry or fear that individuals experience when they are without their mobile phones or they are unable to use them. The term was first coined in 2008 after which it was considered a modern type of phobia (Notara, *et al.*, 2021). When this development is traced back to the early stages of the evolutionary history of life, human beings have made some inventions to facilitate their everyday living. Communication strategy was among the most important steps; telephones provided one way of contact. Since their invention, wired phones have evolved to mobile phones (Hamilton-Ekeke & Rugai, 2016). Today's society tends to get acquainted with every change in the field of communication technology. The initially invented mobile phone has turned to the Smartphone, which is not only a tool of communication, but also data storage medium, camera, a music and game device (Hamilton-Ekeke & Rugai, 2016). Communication technology plays a significant role in everyday life; however, the unrestrained use of the Smartphone leads to the development of certain behavioral addictions.

Nomophobia is the abbreviation for "No-MOBile PHone PhoBIA" and is defined as the fear of being unable to use or being unreachable via one's smart phone. It is a new phobia arising from the interplay with new technologies (Notara, *et al.*, 2021). Various psychological factors are involved when a person overuses the mobile phone, e.g., low self-esteem, extrovert personality, etc. The burden of this problem is now increasing globally (Bhattacharya, *et al.*, 2019). Other mental disorders including social phobia or social anxiety, and panic disorder may also precipitate nomophobic symptoms. It is very difficult to differentiate whether the patient becomes nomophobic due to mobile phone addiction or existing anxiety disorders manifest as nomophobic symptoms (Bhattacharya, *et al.*, 2019).

The term *nomophobia* was first coined by the UK's post office study in 2008 that was assigned to YouGov, an international research and analytics group founded in the UK (Notara, *et al.*, 2021). The aim of the study was to assess the risk of stress disorders as a result of the extreme use of the smart phone. The study found that almost 53% of the participants worried about the case of phone loss, battery draining, or no internet coverage. Moreover, 58% of men and 48% of women underwent mobile phone stress and an additional 9% felt tension when their phones were switched off. In a

similar study in England, 4 years later, 66% of the participants hinted that they felt anxious when their smart phones were out of order or without connection (Notara, *et al.*, 2021).

The mobile phone offers many benefits such as social presence, emotional security, and safety. Individuals appear to prefer indirect communication and be more revealing in virtual reality, because behind the screen gives them the feeling of being more sheltered. In numerous cases, seeking confirmation through communication with other individuals leads to overuse of, and dependence on mobile phones (Argumosa-Villar, Boada-Grau & Vigil-Colet, 2017). This shift from real-life relations and interactions to "social media" in the current digital era has started to have an adverse impact on the progression of identity formation from adolescence through adulthood. Such outcomes highlight the psychological involvement of followers of the social media environment (Notara, *et al.*, 2021).

Smart phones facilitate the system of communication providing a degree of mobility that allows users to be contacted at any time (Han & Shan, 2021). Moreover, communication technology also makes changes in communication with the world, perceptions of real interactions and smart phone interaction. The psychological impact of the use of this technology on individuals, groups and society is generally associated with changes in behaviours before and after the existence of the smart phones (Notara, *et al.*, 2021). Individuals cannot avoid relationships with smartphones, and this greatly affects their interpersonal behavior and social habits. Thus, this situation confirms that a person has become more dependent on mobile phones in their daily lives (Han & Shan, 2021).

Frequently checking phones, spending too much time with mobile phones, avoiding places where mobile phones are prohibited, carrying a charger at all times, having more than one mobile phone, keeping phones close during sleep, going into expense and debt via smartphone, using phones at late hours without sleeping and checking phone in the morning can be listed as the common behaviors among nomophobic individuals (Bragazzi & Puente, 2014; Notara, *et al.*, 2021; Han & Shan, 2021). A typical nomophobic individual can be distinguished by these behaviours. These symptoms or nomophobic behaviours can be found in many individuals in today's technology-driven age. This signals that the modern age phobia threatens the normal population.

Over the years, there has been an increased scientific interest in the problematic and excessive use of mobile phones and their disadvantages (Thomee, *et al.*, 2011). It has been highlighted that the existing levels of *nomophobia* and their relationship with health consequences can be defined as an epidemic outbreak. It seems that the excessive utilization of the smart phone is an emerging public health problem which demands effective public health strategies (Ding & Li, 2017).

Smartphone Overuse: A Growing Public Health Issue

Smartphone overuse (similar terms: mobile phone addiction, problematic mobile phone use, smart phone addiction) refers to people spending too much time on their smart phones to an extent that it negatively affects their life (Ding, & Li, 2017). Smartphone addiction is a form of internet addiction, which is regarded as an addictive behaviour, with profound implications on mental, physical, and social health and wellbeing. Because of its extensive impact on daily life, some new terms were invented in popular culture to describe this problem, such as phubbing, *nomophobia*, smart phone zombie (Ding & Li, 2017). The integration of smart phones into daily life routines has given birth to significant changes in communication. These devices, which combine the functionalities of traditional personal digital assistants and cellular phones, have become global across different demographics (Qalawa, *et al.*, 2024). However, alongside the universal adoption of smart phones, concerns have been raised regarding the potential health risks associated with their excessive use (Qalawa, *et al.*, 2024).

The smart phone use has rapidly increased worldwide. However, research shows that excessive smart phone use poses health risks and reduces sleep quality, which can be detrimental for students (Amin, *et al.*, 2024). Economic development has brought many new technologies into people's daily life, such as mobile internet. Today's smart phones, resemble mini-computers, and provide not only internet services but also access to applications (Apps). The portable and versatile nature of the smart phone satisfies various expectations of the people, like online chatting, gaming, shopping, etc., which should encourage dependency (Inal, *et al.*, 2015). Studies have revealed that excessive smart phone

use is associated with depression and anxiety disorders. In addition to psychological health, it has also been associated with physical health problems. For instance, based on the small screen size, touch panel, and handholding, long time using smart phone increases the risk of ocular diseases, dysfunction of fingers, neck pain, and other musculoskeletal problems (Inal, *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, smart phone overuse also leads to health issues in daily life, as it distracts people and negatively influences productivity and interpersonal relationships. Moreover, smart phone overuse also sucks up time that could have been spent in a more constructive way, and is associated with other lifestyle risk behaviors such as physical inactivity (Olson, *et al.*, 2022).

Another adverse effect of smart phone overuse is accidents and injuries. Smartphone use results in slowed reaction time and heightened distraction, both of which are associated with accidents. It was reported that about a quarter of motor vehicle accidents were attributable to drivers using cell phones in the US (Olson, *et al.*, 2022). In addition, the reduced situation awareness and distracted attention, pedestrians using smart phones have high risk of traffic accidents and falls. Given these wide-ranging consequences, scholars have increasingly examined not only the outcomes but also the underlying risk factors that contribute to the development and persistence of *nomophobia*. Demographic variables - including age, gender, and socioeconomic status (SES)—have been established as key determinants influencing its symptoms (Heng *et al.*, 2023; Hessari *et al.*, 2024). Specifically, research indicates that female students exhibit higher susceptibility to *nomophobia* than their male counterparts (Moreno-Guerrero *et al.*, 2020). However, with respect to age, no significant differences have been observed among young individuals aged 12 to 20 years (Moreno-Guerrero *et al.*, 2020).

Globally, smart phone addiction is recognized as a pressing issue, with prevalence rates varying from 9.3% to 48% in different populations. A recent study reported that 19.1% of individuals exhibited signs of smart phone addiction, highlighting a growing concern in the digital age (Qalawa, 2024). The study also noted sex differences in smart phone addiction, with women showing higher addiction rates than men. The overuse of smart phones has been associated with a range of health issues, including but not limited to musculoskeletal pain, headaches, blurred vision, and hearing disorders (Qalawa, 2024). Furthermore, the psychological dimension of smart phone overuse manifests in different ways such as depression and altered self-esteem, adding to the complexity of the health risks associated with smart phone use (Liu, *et al.*, 2022).

Empirical Review

The first study reviewed in this work was done by Ya'u and Ismail (2024). They investigated the prevalence and effects of *nomophobia* among university students in Kano State, focusing on its effects on academic performance and psychological well-being. The findings indicated that 42.5% of the respondents used their phones constantly and consistently, leading to high levels of anxiety and stress with adverse impact on their academic performance. Strategies to manage distractions included turning off notifications and setting time limits. The study concluded that *nomophobia* significantly affects students' academic performance and mental well-being because of consistent use and attachments to mobile phones. The existing gap here is in the area of study as the former study was conducted in Kano State while the present study took place in Anambra State.

Abdulmalik & Anka (2024) investigated the use of smart phones among students at higher education institutions in North-West, Nigeria, concentrating on usage patterns, reasons and contexts. The study found that smart phones are essential to students' daily routines, with 76.01% using them consistently throughout the day and 77.27% engaging with them mainly in the evening. Communication is the primary objective, with 97.22% using smart phones for voice calls and 98.23% for messaging apps such as WhatsApp; 76.26% participate in educational activities using their gadgets. The study also discovered extreme use of the Smartphone by the students. The researchers advised that schools adopt measures to incorporate judicious smart phone use into educational settings. The existing gap here is that the former study was conducted in the Northwest while the present study is conducted in the Southeast, Nigeria.

Şahin (2021) examined the effects of nomophobic behaviours among university students on their intellectual thinking habit in their daily lives. The study found that *nomophobia* prevents students

from communicating effectively with their friends and intimate environment; this leads to misunderstandings, negates intellectual development and adversely affects their overall lives. The Intellectual thinking tendency in university students is thus affected by *nomophobia*. There is a significant relationship between *nomophobia*, and the tendency to think intellectually. It has long been established that *nomophobia* is an extremely harmful condition; this study has proven that it causes high intellectual harm to young people. The gap in knowledge here is that the former study looked at the intellectual thinking of the students while the current one looked at *nomophobia* influence on academic activities.

Awofala and Esealuka, (2021) investigated *nomophobia*, smart phone addiction, depression, and anxiety as predictors of internet addiction among Nigerian pre-service mathematics teachers. The results showed a high prevalence of *nomophobia* and moderate prevalence of the Smartphone addiction and internet addiction among pre-service mathematics teachers. There was a positive relationship between *nomophobia*, smart phone addiction, anxiety, depression, and internet addiction, of which all were significant predictors of internet addiction. Based on these findings, it was concluded that universities and parents in Nigeria should reduce the prevalence of *nomophobia*, smart phone addiction, depression, anxiety, and internet addiction in pre-service mathematics teachers in the country (Awofala & Esealuka, 2021). The gap in knowledge is that the former study centered on teachers while the current one concentrated on students.

Research Methodology

The researcher employed the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method in getting responses from participants for this research work. The participants were only of COOU students who agreed that they were experiencing some level of *nomophobia*. What made the FGD method very appropriate for this study is its ability to give participants the privilege to express their opinions that may have been missed in the questionnaire interview. The population of this study comprised of COOU students in Igbariam campus totaling 17,500 as supplied by the Academic Planning Unit of the University. It has to be noted that this population is only for the students in Igbariam campus as the institution has three campuses at Awka, Igbariam and Uli but only Igbariam campus was studied. The study used a sample size of 66 participants since it is an exploratory study. The selection was based on the researcher's discretion and convenience. The sampling technique adopted was purposive sampling, used in selecting the 66 participants for the study. Six (6) FGD sessions were held altogether. The FGD sessions lasted for an average of 50 minutes with a distribution of 11 participants per session; the discussions took place between the hours of 1pm and 5pm on Saturdays during the research period. The choice of day and time was essentially to fit into the time students would be in their lodges during weekends. The interview question guide was used in gathering the necessary data.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This work investigated the influence of *nomophobia* on the academic activities of COOU students. A total of 66 discussants were selected in the study using purposive sampling technique. Results from the field are presented below.

Demographic Data

The demographic factors considered relevant for this study are Age and gender of respondents.

Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	27	41
Female	39	59
Total	66	100
Age (yrs)	Frequency	Percentage
18-25	48	73
26-35	12	17
36 and above	6	10
Total	66	100

Source: Field Work, 2026

The table above shows that females dominated the study and that most of the participants are within the age range of 18-25 years.

Answers to Research Questions

Research Question One: What is the level of *nomophobia* experienced by COOU students?

This research question set out to investigate the level of *nomophobia* encountered by COOU students. Most of the participants agreed that they were experiencing a high level of *nomophobia* as they could not do without their phones for the greater part of the day. Some said they could not do without checking their phones within a short while; some others said they cannot afford to be without their smart phones any time of the day. According to Adaora, a participant from Sociology department, *"I can't just do without my phone; I can't even control it again because I check updates almost every minute; then at night I browse for a long time before I sleep; I can describe my own level of nomophobia to be very high; my smart phone is just like a part of my body and I can't do without having data on it always."* Her comment was supported by other participants in the various FGD sessions who said they were encountering high level of *nomophobia* since they are addicted to their smart phones; and the fear of not having it with them or not having data on their phone makes them very worried and uncomfortable. From the results, it could be concluded that most of the participants experienced a high level of *nomophobia*.

Research Question Two: Does specific course of study make students more prone to *nomophobia*?

This research question was designed to ascertain whether any specified course of study makes students more prone to *nomophobia*. Most participants said that their courses in school are not responsible for the *nomophobia* they were experiencing. They said that despite the fact that they use their smart phones for assignments, other things they do with the phone got them addicted and afraid to be without their phones. According to Michael, a participant from Mass Communication Department, *"Mine is because of the course I am studying; I actually use my phone for assignments and for someone studying mass communication I always check my phone for news and other information that help my studies but the main thing is that I check social media too often and I want to always see updates; so the course also contributes."* Another participant, Patricia from the Faculty of Law said, *"The problem is not my course. I just can't imagine myself without my phone or without data to check updates. I do assignments with my phone and other studies too, granted, but my phone is now like a part of me and I feel incomplete and restless when I am not with it."* Many other participants also agreed that the experience of *nomophobia* they had was not because of the course they were studying.

Research Question Three: What are the specific smart phone activities that aggravate *nomophobia* among COOU students?

This research question was structured to find out the specific smart phone activities that aggravate *nomophobia* among COOU students. Most of the participants said the activities they always do with their smart phones leading to *nomophobia* are frequent checking of notifications and messages, too much social media exposure, internet browsing and calls for extended periods. Some said they also played games, watched videos and used other apps on their phones. According to Bismark from the Department of Marketing, *"I browse a lot and check updates almost every three to five minutes; in fact any time I have space I check notifications and I watch a lot of videos online."* Another participant, Ifeyinwa from the Department of Economics said, *"I make a lot of internet calls; I check my notifications and messages, and Facebook will not let me rest; I check it always."* From the discussions, it is obvious that the activities the participants always do with their smart phones which lead to *nomophobia* are frequent checking of notifications and messages, longer social media exposure, internet browsing and phone calls for longer period of time.

Research Question Four: What is the influence of *nomophobia* on COOU students' academic activities?

This research question was designed to ascertain the influence of *nomophobia* on COOU students' academic activities. Participants said that *nomophobia* affected their academic activities by making them have poor study habits, attend lectures late, poor concentration in class due to sleep disturbances, anxiety and stress. They said that the excessive use of their smart phones caused the *nomophobia* and this created anxiety leading to poor grades. One of the participants, Martins from Psychology Department said, *"I don't know whether to call it smart phone addiction or nomophobia but I know that my grades are now being affected because of the way I use my phone; the fear of not having data even makes me jittery somehow and this is not good for my studies; sometimes I miss lectures because of this issue."* Another participant, Rita from English Department said, *"The anxiety caused by this nomophobia affects my study habits; I no longer feel like going to read because I might be checking my phone every time; it is really a problem and I want to stop it; sometimes I even go to lectures late because of my phone because I am checking updates regularly; this phone shouldn't be controlling me the way it is currently doing; I don't like it."* Generally, participants said that *nomophobia* affected their academic activities by making them have poor study habits, attend lectures late, and poor concentration in class due to sleep disturbances, anxiety and stress which manifest in their poor grades.

Discussion of Findings

The first research objective examined the level of *nomophobia* experienced by COOU students. Data revealed that most of the students experienced high level of *nomophobia*. This is in support of studies on high level of *nomophobia* among students globally (Neelima, *et al.*, 2023; Celik, *et al.*, 2023; Al-Mamun, *et al.*, 2023; Mahajan, *et al.*, 2025). *Nomophobia* has also been found to be prevalent among Nigerian students as they also experience this unique psychological condition occasioned by the fear or anxiety associated with being without access to one's mobile phone (Okoye, Obi-Nwosu & Obikwelu, 2018; Ya'u & Ismail, 2024). This finding is also supported by the Technological Determinism theory which says that technology determines how people live their lives (Agbanu, 2013; Nwodu, 2017; Griffin, Ledbetter & Sparks, 2022). It is possible that COOU students are experiencing *nomophobia* because they have made technology (the smart phone) a part of them.

The second objective examined whether COOU students in a particular course of study are more prone to *nomophobia*. The result shows that studying a particular course in school does not make a student prone to *nomophobia*. This finding supports studies which explain that there are factors responsible for exposing students to *nomophobia* (Han & Shan, 2021; Nguyen, *et al.*, 2024). Frequently checking phones, spending longer time with mobile phones, avoiding places where mobile phones are prohibited, carrying a charger at all times, having more than one mobile phone, keeping phones close during sleep, going into expense and debt via smart phone, using phones at late hours without sleeping and checking phone in the morning can be listed as the common behaviors among nomophobic individuals (Bragazzi & Puente, 2014; Notara, *et al.*, 2021; Han & Shan, 2021; Nguyen, *et al.*, 2024).

The third objective set out to examine the specific smart phone activities that aggravate *nomophobia* among COOU students. Evidence shows that the activities the participants always do with their smart phones which make them experience *nomophobia* are frequent checking of notifications and messages, too much social media exposure, internet browsing and calls for extended periods. This is supported by studies which established that excessive use of smart phone leads to *nomophobia* (Okoye, Obi-Nwosu & Obikwelu, 2018; Nguyen, *et al.*, 2024). Studies have also shown that spending so much time on the internet creates anxiety that leads to *nomophobia* (Han & Shan, 2021); and that smart phone-dependent students experience distraction and anxiety that causes *nomophobia* (Nguyen, *et al.*, 2024).

It has to be noted that exposure social media platforms for news and information also leads to *nomophobia*. Since we are in the new media age, and social media platforms provide news and information to a greater number of people (Ikegbunam & Obiakor, 2021, in Obiakor, Ikegbunam & Ezeumenwa, 2024; Obiakor, Onwuka & Chinedu, 2024). Veritably, the social media remain one of

the most vibrant means of disseminating information to the masses ((Obiakor, & Ikegbunam, 2021; Obiakor, Ikegbunam & Ezeja, 2024; Obiakor, Okereke & Agbachukwu, 2024; Obiakor, Obiora & Okafor, 2025), and social media are one of the major sources of information especially on politics, for users (Duru, 2019, in Obiakor & Adikuru, 2024). Hence, the youth rely on social media to satisfy their information needs and use these platforms to stay updated on global events (Uche & Obiora, 2016; Adikuru & Obiora, 2021). This is about a demonstration of the universality of the internet and its permeation ability (Obiakor, Adikuru & Agbakaj, 2022), where WhatsApp is one of the social networking sites where political issues are being discussed everyday by users (Obiakor, Ikegbunam & Ezeaso, 2023). Therefore, the role of the social media in projecting public information to the people is hereby acknowledged (Ikegbunam & Obiakor, 2023; Obiakor 2025; Obiakor, Obi & Ezeorji, 2025); invariable, *nomophobia* is more probable to keep increasing.

Meanwhile, Obiora and Uche (2022) noted that the television and radio can quickly disseminate breaking news as it happens, making them primary sources of timely information; incidentally, there is an issue of distrust. Therefore, *nomophobia* has been attributed to the fact that “When audience members in the society distrust the mainstream media (for exposure to news and information), they have a tendency to withdraw from them and turn towards alternative sources (Müller & Schulz, 2021, in Obiakor, 2024). This high level of exposure to social media platforms depicts an agreement to the fact that vibrant and active media are indispensable tools for political mobilization (Ezinwa, 2015, in Obiakor, Okelue & Okeke, 2024), in the sense that without access to the full range of information about their world, citizens cannot fulfill their roles, and democracy will wither (Kurfi, 2010, in Obiakor, Okelue & Okeke, 2024) in the sense that these media platforms do not just tell us what to think but what to think about (Asemah, 2011; Obiakor, Ezeorji & Okeke, 2024; Obiakor, Obi & Ezeorji, 2025); hence, *nomophobia* will definitely keep increasing.

The fourth objective set out to ascertain the ways in which *nomophobia* affects COOU students' academic activities. This result showed that *nomophobia* affects COOU students' academic activities by making them have poor reading habits, attend lectures late, poor concentration in class due to sleep disturbances, anxiety and stress, and subsequently resulting to poor grades. Studies have revealed that *nomophobia* affects academic activities of students. Ya'u and Ismail (2024) investigated the prevalence and effects of *nomophobia* among university students in Kano State and found that *nomophobia* significantly affects students in their academics as well as mental well-being due to consistent use of their mobile phones. Some studies have also shown that *nomophobia* makes students to have poor study habits, attend lectures late, and lose concentration in class (Tucó, *et al.*, 2023; Al-Mamun, *et al.*, 2023; Naser, *et al.*, 2023). Studies have also shown that *nomophobia* causes sleep disturbances, anxiety and stress which affect academic output among students (Samsudin, *et al.*, 2021; Yilmaz, *et al.*, 2023).

Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of *nomophobia* on the academic activities of COOU students. The study focused on COOU students in Igbariam campus, especially those experiencing *nomophobia*. The research work had four objectives with Focus Group Discussion as the research method adopted for the study. Data revealed that participants experienced high level of *nomophobia*; the participants maintained that the course of study in school does not have anything to do with *nomophobia* but revealed that the activities that exposed them to *nomophobia* are frequent checking of notifications and messages, too much social media exposure, internet browsing and calls for extended periods; and that *nomophobia* affects their academic activities by making them have poor study habits, attend lectures late, have poor concentration in class due to sleep disturbances, experience anxiety and stress and have poor grades in their academic results. These findings were analyzed showing how they supported the technological determinism theory which formed the theoretical foundation in the study. It was concluded that the era of the new media has led to the prevalence of *nomophobia* leaving the society with both the negative and the positive sides of technological development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are put forward:

- The ministry of education, including education officers in government and private sectors should embark on awareness creation across schools on the harmful effects of *nomophobia* and withdrawal strategies.
- Government and private tertiary institutions should make it a point of duty to hold regular seminars in schools to encourage students to avoid excessive use of the smart phones; this will discourage the increase of *nomophobia* on students.
- Schools can also include programmes on how to cope with *nomophobia* and strategies to avoid excessive use of smart phones. This way, students can gradually withdraw from activities that could lead them into *nomophobia*.
- There is need for further studies in this area of study in other States in the country to check the influence of *nomophobia* on students' academic activities and their coping techniques.

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