

AM I OUT OF MY MOBILE NETWORK? A CASE OF NOMOPHOBIA.

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ABSTRACT:

We are getting more reliant on all the developing current innovations in the field of technology. Role of cellular telephones in our regular life is known to all. However, Nomophobia or no mobile phone phobia is a fresher terminology in the psychiatric practice. Patients seeking psychiatric help for this peculiar type of phobia are not usually observed. Here we are depicting a case of Nomophobia who attended to our Out Patient Department for treatment.

Keywords: Psychology, Nomophobia, Anxiety, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual

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Introduction:

Usages of mobile phones are increasing day by day. Study by Gartner et al. reported that in the fourth quarter of 2011, 92.2 million personal computers and 149 million mobile phones were sold worldwide (Gartner, 2011). But later on in the same year sale of Personnel Computers declined by 1.4%, whereas the sale of smart phones increased by 58% (Gartner, 2011; Nielsen, 2011). Mobile phones usage in the United States(US) has also exploded, bouncing from just 18% in the third quarter of 2009 to 44% during the third quarter ending in October 2011 according to the Nielsen Mobile Media Report (Nielsen, 2011). The pattern of utilization of cell telephones has been likewise changing in India (Press Trust of India, 2014). Study has showed that India has higher number of cellular telephones clients than US (Press Trust of India, 2014). However Nomophobia is a newer terminology in the psychiatric practice. Bivin et al.,2013 has said that Nomophobia is a form of behavioral addiction towards mobile phones and manifested as symptoms of Psychological as well as physical dependency. It literally means no mobile phobia that is the fear of being out of mobile phone contact (Dixit et al., 2010). King et al., 2010 considered Nomophobia as a 21st century disorder resulting from new technologies and defined it as a discomfort or anxiety when out of mobile phone or computer contact or a fear of becoming technologically incommunicable, distant from the mobile phones or not connected to the Web. Nomophobia term was first coined through a study in 2008, which was conducted in a post office of United Kingdom (SecurEnvoy, 2012). More than half of their study population had suffered from nomophobia (SecurEnvoy, 2012). 58% of male participants and 48% of female participants demonstrated feelings of anxiety when they were unable to use their phone (SecurEnvoy, 2012). In terms of age, young adults of 18-24 yrs were found to be Nomophobic than other age groups (SecurEnvoy, 2012). Various other studies have been directed in this

respect to depict the impact of cell telephone on the human psychology (Bivin et al., 2013; Dixit et al., 2010; King et al., 2010; SecurEnvoy, 2012; Katharine, 2008; Macro - market analysis and consumer research organization, 2004; King et al., 2014). However patient seeking help for this peculiar type of phobia is not seen usually in the psychiatric facilities. Here we have demonstrated a case who had presented to us with this peculiar type of phobia.

Case history:

A 35 years Hindu male presented to our Out Patient Department with anxiety symptoms like feeling of apprehension, restlessness, increased urinary urgency, tremor and palpitation which are associated with fear of going out of home for the last 2 months. While enquiring regarding the precipitating factor, he revealed that he is a forest guard in the Kaziranga national park. 2 months ago while in the duty he had to face a gang of poachers who entered the forest areas. Promptly he attempted to contact his partners over telephone as numbers of poachers were higher than them. But they could not establish any contact as their mobile phones were out of network coverage. But somehow they managed to escape from there. After that event every time he feels fearful, thinking that he will be out of the mobile network coverage areas. He over and again uses to check his telephone to affirm himself that he is inside the network coverage. He took leave for some days following that event. The severity of apprehension has expanded upto so much extent that nowadays he does not want to go out of home thinking that he will be out of network areas. His past psychiatric and medical history did not suggest any abnormality. Premorbidly he had anxiety traits. Family history of any mental illness and substance abuse history were negative. Looking at the entire picture he was diagnosed to be a case of Nomophobia. Consequently, he was prescribed tablet Paroxetine 12.5 mg in the morning and Clonazepam 0.5 mg twice daily. Paroxetine was titrated upto 25 mg/day in a period of 1 month. Along with that cognitive behavioral therapy and relaxation therapy were applied. In subsequent visits he was maintaining well and attending his duties regularly.

Discussion:

The term Nomophobia is a newer entry in psychiatric world. Bivin et al., 2013 conducted a study on 547 undergraduate students of various health sciences and concluded that 76.78% of their study population used to check their mobile phones more than 35 times a day and 14.8% of students always carry the mobile charger with them so that it always remains on. A study by Katharine, 2008 which was conducted in United Kingdom on 2163 people revealed that 53% of the subjects tend to be anxious when they lose their mobile phone, run out of battery or credit or have no network coverage. The study concluded that about 58% of men and 48% of women suffer from the phobia, and an additional 9% feel stressed when their mobile phones are off (Katharine, 2008). Market Analysis and Consumer Research Organization (MACRO) in Mumbai has also stated in their study that 58% of the study subjects could not manage without a mobile phone even for a day (Macro - market analysis and consumer research organization, 2004). A study from Brazil reported that patients with panic disorder showed more anxiety symptoms than the control group when they were out of contact with their mobile phone (King et al., 2014). A study conducted in United Kingdom revealed that 53% of their participants expressed the fear of no mobile phone (SecurEnvoy, 2012). Our patient had also developed anxiety symptoms which was associated with fear of losing mobile network. The encounter with the poachers has acted as a triggering factor in our case. The rising prevalence of mobile phone addiction and Nomophobia has depicted through various studies. Bragazzi et al., 2014 had also proposed the inclusion of Nomophobia in the newer version of The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). However, cases with severe form of Nomophobia asking for psychiatric help are not generally seen. The essential thought process behind our study was to report the extent of severity of psychological disturbance of this newer type of phobia. The authors would like to hear similar cases from others.

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