

**Nomophobia in the University Environment between Mobile Phone Addiction and the
Decline of Academic Performance:
- A Field Study on a Sample of Students from the Faculty of Social Sciences, University
of Mostaganem -**

النوموفوبيا في الوسط الجامعي بين الادمان على الهاتف وتراجع الأداء الأكاديمي
- دراسة ميدانية على عينة من طلبة كلية العلوم الاجتماعية جامعة مستغانم -

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Abstract:

The study aims to explore the phenomenon of nomophobia and its relationship with mobile phone addiction and the pathological fear of losing one's phone among students of Social Sciences at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University of Mostaganem during the 2025–2026 academic year. The descriptive–analytical method was applied to a random sample of 77 students through an online questionnaire to measure the prevalence of nomophobia and patterns of mobile phone use. The findings revealed that most students use their phones excessively, leading to distraction and decreased concentration during lectures. Results showed that students spend more than six hours per day on their mobile phones, confirming digital addiction through symptoms of anxiety, fear, and psychological instability when the phone is lost or turned off. All these factors have negatively affected their academic performance. The study therefore calls for decision-making initiatives and greater awareness regarding mobile phone use within classrooms.

Keywords: Nomophobia; phone addiction; students; academic performance.

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1. Introduction:

Mobile phone technology has become an integral part of people's lives. In recent years, the university environment has witnessed a widespread use of this device, extending far beyond its traditional communicative function. Various new patterns of communication have emerged, altering students' behaviors due to the excessive use of mobile phones during lectures and classroom activities. This phenomenon has become a growing concern for many professors and researchers, as continuous phone use during lectures has led to psychological and behavioral disturbances that directly affect students' attention and concentration.

This study seeks to understand the relationship between nomophobia, students' mobile phone addiction, and their academic performance. It emphasizes the communicative context of the phenomenon more than its psychological dimension, focusing on how this medium the smartphone affects academic performance.

The topic has attracted the attention of researchers from psychological, social, and communication perspectives because of its close association with digital media and its observable influence on students' behaviors, which negatively impacts both their academic achievement and daily life.

Based on these premises, this study aims to determine the prevalence of nomophobia within the university environment and its relationship with academic performance among students of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Mostaganem. It also seeks to shed light on nomophobia from a communication-oriented perspective, examining the role of the smartphone inside classrooms and assessing the level of anxiety associated with its loss.

Ultimately, the study strives to identify the reasons behind the decline in academic performance within the university setting and to propose potential solutions and institutional measures to reduce excessive smartphone use among university students.

2. Problem Statement:

In recent years, the mobile phone has undergone a qualitative leap and rapid technological development. Once merely a tool for communication, it has now become a double-edged sword. While it undoubtedly facilitates communication and enables the rapid flow of information, it also exerts negative influences on individuals' lives, most notably through the emergence of what is known as nomophobia the pathological fear of losing one's mobile phone.

This phenomenon has become a source of concern for many professors and researchers, especially within the educational context, as the intensive use of mobile phones by university students has led to significant psychological and behavioral changes. Students have become excessively attached to their phones, relying on them in almost every setting at home, school, work, on public transport, and at university. This overreliance has impacted both their mental and physical well-being, fostering a compulsive addiction to mobile devices and altering their social behaviors and lifestyles. Consequently, this has negatively affected their academic learning and performance.

The idea for this study stemmed from the researcher's field experience in teaching university students and observing their excessive phone use during lectures, their resistance to turning off their devices, and their difficulty maintaining focus on the instructor.

Therefore, this research aims to investigate the extent of the nomophobia phenomenon defined as anxiety or fear related to mobile phone separation among students at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University in Mostaganem.

Main Research Question:

How has the smartphone contributed to the spread of nomophobia within the university environment, and what is its impact on academic performance among students at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University?

1.2 Research Questions:

- What are the main causes behind the spread of nomophobia among students of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Mostaganem?
- What is the relationship between nomophobia and academic performance among students of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Mostaganem?
- What percentage of students experience pathological fear of losing their mobile phones during their academic activities?
- What are the most common cognitive and behavioral patterns exhibited by students during lectures at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Mostaganem?
- What are the statistical differences among students in terms of gender, age, type of mobile phone, and duration of daily use?

3. Significance of the Study:

The importance of this study lies in introducing and analyzing a new concept in media and communication research nomophobia and examining its relationship with mobile phone use while linking it to psychological studies. The phenomenon of nomophobia deserves further academic exploration and attention from researchers, as it affects a significant segment of society, particularly university students.

The study gains further relevance in light of the increasing prevalence of anxiety associated with losing one's phone, turning it off, or experiencing Internet disconnection situations that reflect a shift in students' behavioral patterns due to excessive mobile phone use during lectures and classroom sessions. This overuse has led to symptoms of addiction and dependency, affecting not only students' learning outcomes but also their overall lifestyle.

Hence, the present research highlights a contemporary issue with direct implications for students' psychological and academic well-being.

4. Objectives of the Study:

To establish a connection between the phenomenon of nomophobia and academic performance among students of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Mostaganem.

To identify the main factors that have contributed to the spread of nomophobia within the university environment among students of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Mostaganem.

To determine the prevalence rate of pathological fear of losing one's mobile phone among students of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Mostaganem.

5. Key Concepts of the Study:

5.1 Nomophobia:

Definition:

Nomophobia is a recently recognized psychological and behavioral disorder characterized by excessive fear or anxiety resulting from the loss of mobile phone connectivity, service interruption, or inability to use the device (Sobhi & Ghattas, 2021, p. 512).

Operational Definition:

Nomophobia represents a type of phobia manifested by intense fear or discomfort when an individual feels they have lost their mobile phone, forgotten it somewhere, or are out of network coverage and unable to communicate via the Internet. In classroom contexts, when professors request that students turn off their phones, affected individuals experience anxiety and psychological distress a state that reflects compulsive mobile phone addiction.

5.2 Mobile Phone Addiction:

Definition:

According to Mustafa Abdel Mohsen, mobile phone addiction is a form of behavioral addiction that arises from psychological dependence on mobile phone use, leading to various psychological and social problems due to the individual's inability to control the time spent on the device (Ghattas, 2019, p. 152).

Operational Definition:

The term refers to the students' intensive and continuous use of mobile phones for diverse purposes, often connected to the Internet even during lectures. This excessive reliance on the device becomes part of their daily academic and social routines, indicating a pattern of behavioral dependence.

Operational Definition:

The mobile phone is defined as a communication tool on which university students heavily rely and use intensively across different contexts. It remains constantly connected to the Internet, even during study hours and within classrooms, thus becoming an essential medium for both academic and non-academic activities.

5.3 Students:

Definition:

A student is an individual enrolled in a university or higher education institution who attends courses and has chosen to pursue academic or professional studies (Ateeq, 2011, p. 402)

Operational Definition:

This category refers to individuals registered for the 2025–2026 academic year at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University in Mostaganem. They differ in age, gender, and frequency of mobile phone use, and they represent various specializations within the Faculty of Social Sciences.

5.4 Academic Achievement:

Definition:

Academic achievement refers to the amount of knowledge, skills, or competencies a student acquires, expressed as measurable scores in standardized assessments designed to evaluate specific learning levels (Meknassi, 2018, p. 248).

Operational Definition:

Academic achievement in this study denotes the level of a student's scientific and intellectual performance throughout the academic process. It includes indicators of concentration, motivation, and attentiveness during lectures. This variable is measured through the patterns of mobile phone use and the degree of students' dependence on this device during class sessions.

6. Previous Studies:

The study by **Chaima Kamal Abdel-Alim Hasen** (Kamal Abd el Alim Hasen, 2020) aimed to investigate the prevalence of nomophobia the fear of losing one's mobile phone and its relationship with academic engagement and mindfulness among Al-Azhar University students during the 2021–2022 academic year. The sample consisted of 400 students, and the researcher used several self-developed instruments: the Nomophobia Scale, the Academic Engagement Scale, and the Mindfulness Scale. The results revealed that female students exhibited higher levels of pathological fear of losing their phones and showed greater tendencies toward anxiety than male students.

Another study by **Lulwa Mutlaq Fares Al-Jasser** (Mutlaq Fares Al-Jasser, 2018) examined nomophobia and its relationship with academic achievement among secondary school students in Kuwait. The sample included 154 male and female students. The researcher employed two main instruments: the Nomophobia Disorder Scale and the Academic

Achievement Scale. The findings indicated a significant negative relationship between the fear of losing one's mobile phone and students' academic achievement that is, the greater the fear, the lower the academic performance.

7. Research Population:

The population of this study comprised all students of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University of Mostaganem, across various specializations, who were registered for the 2025–2026 academic year. Participants included students who actively engage on the official social media page of the Faculty of Social Sciences, are frequent users of mobile phones, and regularly attend lectures and practical sessions.

8. Study Sample:

A simple random sample was selected, consisting of students from the Faculty of Social Sciences who use mobile phones intensively and are active participants on the faculty's official online platform. This sampling method ensured that all members of the research population had equal opportunities to participate by accessing and responding to the online questionnaire. The process was conducted without any interference from the researcher regarding the identification of participants.

9. Methodology:

The researcher employed the descriptive analytical method, which is suitable for exploring the phenomenon of nomophobia and its impact on academic achievement among university students. This method allows for an accurate description of the phenomenon and for identifying the relationship between key variables: nomophobia, academic performance, and digital addiction within the university context.

10. Study Delimitations:

The topical delimitation of this research lies in examining the phenomenon of the fear of losing one's mobile phone nomophobia within classroom settings and its relationship with

academic performance among students of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

The spatial delimitation of the study is the Wilaya of Mostaganem, Algeria, where the research was conducted.

As for the temporal delimitation, the study was carried out during the first semester of the 2025–2026 academic year.

11. Research Instrument:

The researcher employed a questionnaire as the primary tool for data collection in order to obtain accurate and reliable results regarding the phenomenon of nomophobia.

An electronic survey was distributed as the main data-gathering method, considering the widespread use of digital interaction platforms among university students. The questionnaire was designed to include the following thematic sections:

1. General Information demographic and background data of participants.
2. Causes of Nomophobia among University Students within the broader academic environment.
3. Factors Contributing to Nomophobia in Classroom Settings specific behavioral and situational elements.
4. Nomophobia and Its Relationship with Academic Achievement analysis of the connection between mobile phone dependence and academic outcomes.
5. Impact of Nomophobia on Student Behavior exploration of the psychological and behavioral manifestations linked to mobile phone anxiety.

11. Theoretical Framework of the Study:

The researcher employed two communication theories: the Uses and Gratifications Theory and the Media Dependency Theory. The Uses and Gratifications Theory posits that media enables audiences to navigate within the context of media messages, selecting what they

wish and interacting with what they desire, according to their preferences, motivations, and individual differences (Ben Saoud, 2014, p. 131). This theory aims to understand how individuals use media to satisfy their needs and goals, identify the motivations behind media use, and examine the outcomes obtained from such media. It also emphasizes that understanding mass communication results from the use of mass media (Youcefi Mohamed, 2013, p. 215).

The Media Dependency Theory suggests that audiences rely on media information to meet their needs and achieve specific goals, and that media influence is proportional to the degree to which individuals depend on the information provided by these media (Al-Dala'in & Kafi, 2014, p. 247). This theory asserts that societies vary according to their stability: the more instability and disorder in a society, the greater the reliance of individuals on media. Furthermore, the less capable a society's media system is of fulfilling the public's goals and needs, the higher the audience's dependency on media (Abdel Maqsoud, 2018, p. 4).

12. The Applied Aspect of the Study

12.1. Axis One: Personal Data

Table 01: Gender

Category	Percentage
Female	78.9%
Male	21.1%

The study results indicate that the percentage of females reached 78.9%, compared to 21.1% males. This predominance of females is a characteristic feature of the faculty, where the proportion of female students is higher in terms of both academic excellence and regular attendance.

Most research confirms that females tend to exhibit a stronger emotional attachment and affective involvement when interacting with digital media, due to psychological and social factors experienced in real life.

Members of the audience are generally able to identify their psychological and social needs and choose the media that fulfill those needs. This helps to understand the relationship between nomophobia (the fear of being without one's mobile phone) and academic achievement from a gender perspective.

Hence, the higher proportion of females corresponds with the nature of the gratifications provided by mobile phones, which in turn leads to an increased level of nomophobia among them.

Table 02: Academic Year

Category	Percentage
Second Year Licence	39.5%
First Year Master	22.4%
Third Year Licence	17.1%
Second Year Master	17.1%
First Year Licence	3.9%

The results indicate that the majority of the sample belong to the second year of the Licence program (39.5%), followed by first-year Master's students (22.4%), then third-year Licence students (17.1%), and second-year Master's students (17.1%) as well. Meanwhile, first-year Licence students represented only 3.9% of the total sample.

These results demonstrate that most students possess a certain level of experience and awareness regarding the phenomenon under study, as they are more knowledgeable about mobile phone addiction and its impact on academic achievement within classroom settings. This finding aligns with the Media Dependency Theory, which posits that individuals' reliance on media increases as they seek continuous information and knowledge. In this context, students tend to depend on digital media platforms to satisfy their informational needs, reflecting a form of media dependency that influences their academic behavior and learning outcomes.

Table 03: Age

Category	Percentage
Under 20 years	27.6%
21–23 years	47.4%
24 years and above	25%

The study results show that the most represented age group is that of 21 to 23 years, with a percentage of 47.4%, followed by the under-20 group (27.6%), and finally those aged 24 and above (25%).

These percentages indicate that the majority of the sample consists of young adults, a group typically characterized by dynamism, academic engagement, and high use of digital media. This demographic tends to rely more heavily on mobile phones for identity expression, social interaction, and self-esteem, which together form the psychological foundation underlying the prevalence of nomophobia (the fear or anxiety of being without one's mobile phone).

Table 04: Do You Own a Smartphone?

Category	Number	Percentage
Own a smartphone	76	98.7%
Do not own a smartphone	1	1.3%

The results indicate that 76 out of 77 students in the sample own a smartphone, representing an overwhelming majority of the participants. This finding underscores the widespread prevalence of smartphones within the university environment, where such devices have become an indispensable tool for students used across academic, social, and entertainment contexts.

This widespread ownership reflects the high level of engagement and interaction students maintain within the digital sphere, a behavior that can lead to digital dependency and an increased fear of being without one’s phone commonly referred to as nomophobia.

Accordingly, smartphone ownership emerges as a key factor in explaining the relationship between mobile phone addiction and declining academic performance. The psychological dependency on mobile phones often develops through repeated gratification experiences, aligning with Media Dependency Theory, which suggests that the more individuals are exposed to and reliant on media, the higher the likelihood of developing symptoms of nomophobia.

Table 05: How Long Have You Been Using a Smartphone?

Category	Percentage
More than 4 years	80%
2 to 3 years	17.3%
Less than 1 year	2.7%

The results show that 80% of students have been using a smartphone for more than four years, while 17.3% have used one for two to three years, and only 2.7% have been using it for less than one year.

These figures indicate that the majority of students have extensive experience with smartphone usage, suggesting that digital habits have become deeply ingrained in their daily behavior. Consequently, the smartphone has evolved into an integral component of their communicative and cognitive system.

According to the Uses and Gratifications Theory, audiences actively select the messages and media content that satisfy their personal needs and desires; hence, individuals not media are the ones who initiate exposure. This theoretical lens helps explain how prolonged use of smartphones often correlates with an increased likelihood of digital addiction and nomophobia.

Over time, individuals tend to develop a psychological and communicative dependency on their phones, making it difficult to disengage even in academic contexts that require sustained attention and concentration.

Table 06: What Is Your Average Daily Smartphone Usage?

Category	Percentage
More than 6 hours	41.3% %
4 to 6 hours	37.3%
2 to 3 hours	21.3%
Less than 1 hour	0%

The study findings reveal that 41.3% of students use their smartphones for more than six hours per day, followed by 37.3% who use them between four and six hours, and 21.3% whose usage ranges between two and three hours. No cases were recorded for less than one hour of daily use.

These results indicate that the majority of students spend a considerable amount of time on their smartphones, reflecting a high level of behavioral and cognitive attachment to this medium. Such intensive use provides clear evidence of digital addiction, as smartphones have transcended their primary communicative function to become multifunctional tools for entertainment, learning, and social interaction.

According to the Media Dependency Theory, this form of use aligns with the concept of isolated entertainment gratifications, such as comfort, relaxation, arousal, and social entertainment, including activities like listening to music, watching videos, and viewing images.

Moreover, excessive daily use, particularly beyond six hours, is identified as a major contributing factor to attention dispersion and reduced academic concentration, while also increasing the likelihood of developing nomophobia within the university setting.

Axis Two: Causes of the Spread of Nomophobia among Students:

What are the reasons that make you unable to give up your mobile phone during the day?

The results of this question show that 41.9% of students find it difficult to spend an entire day without their phone, followed by 36.5% who mainly use it for social relationships and daily communication, while 21.6% believe that the phone is a means of entertainment and an escape from reality, and no student expressed a clear sense of fear or instability when losing the phone. This indicates that the attachment to the phone has become a psychological and behavioral dependence, which has surpassed the mere function of communication and has shifted towards interaction and managing their daily lives through this device. This makes the idea of separation from the phone almost impossible.

As for the group that uses the phone for entertainment, escapism, and psychological gratification, the phone becomes a tool to relieve daily stress and psycho-social problems. The absence of explicit fear of losing the phone may reflect a lack of awareness among students regarding the extent of their dependency on the device, pushing them into the circle of mobile phone addiction. The difficulty of giving up the phone reflects the degree to which this device satisfies basic needs, which is the core of the Uses and Gratifications Theory.

Axis Three: Causes of the Spread of Nomophobia among University Students in Classroom Settings:

The results indicate that 64.3% of students use their phones during lectures to follow course-related content, while 22.9% do so due to their lack of trust in the teacher. Meanwhile, 5.7% feel anxious when their phone battery runs out during class, and 4.3% use their phones out of dislike for the teacher, whereas 2.9% use them due to lack of interest in university study.

These results confirm that students have developed a tendency to employ digital devices as a learning tool (64.3%), which represents a fundamental shift compared to traditional learning. On the other hand, students' attachment to the phone during lectures is related to

the weak pedagogical relationship between students and teachers and the decline in interest in formal study, making the phone an escape tool from lectures. The Uses and Gratifications Theory assumes that the active audience seeks alternative media when traditional sources fail to satisfy their needs.

The percentage of students who feel anxious when the battery drains reflects a strong emotional and psychological dependence on smartphones. Signs of anxiety and tension appear within the academic context, which explains the prevalence of nomophobia. According to Media Dependency Theory, the increasing fear of losing the media source creates anxiety and confusion, which is a form of dependency and one of the core characteristics of nomophobia.

How does the use of smartphones affect your level of concentration and academic performance?

The results show that 64% of students rely on their phones to enhance their academic and research performance, while 16% postpone studying due to being preoccupied with phone use. Additionally, 13.3% believe that nighttime phone usage affects their sleep and academic achievement, whereas 6.7% admit that using their phones during lectures decreases their academic concentration.

The results indicate that students' relationship with smartphones fluctuates between positive academic use and addictive behavior. Students acknowledge that smartphones have advantages in academic research and serve as a source of information. Through the component of "understanding," which is a key element in the Media Dependency Theory, students develop self-awareness through learning, gaining knowledge, acquiring experiences, and understanding the world and society.

However, neglecting revision and sleep disturbances prevent them from using the smartphone in a positive manner. This shows that smartphone use has exceeded the useful threshold and has shifted toward addiction, which negatively affects academic performance. Hence, it can be concluded that smartphones have both positive and negative effects depending on students' usage patterns and behaviors.

What behaviors do you exhibit as a result of feeling fear or anxiety when away from your mobile phone?

The results indicate that 35.2% of students check their phone notifications even during lectures, and 32.1% feel psychological comfort when the phone is near them during class, while 18.3% admit that they feel fear when the phone is not close to them. In contrast, 7% charge their phones more than once a day for fear of losing connectivity, 4.2% cannot focus if the phone is far away, and 2.8% think about their phone even during exams or lectures.

The results demonstrate the extent to which nomophobia is spreading within classrooms, leading to anxiety, attachment to the smartphone, and physical fatigue. This produces stress and loss of concentration, especially when the device is far away or taken away by the teacher. Conversely, having the phone close provides a sense of reassurance, safety, and psychological and physical comfort, making it an essential and secure element for students.

How do you describe your own behavior and that of your classmates in using mobile phones inside the classroom?

The results of this section show that 40% of students keep their phones on silent mode but check them frequently, while 11.4% use the phone for academic purposes and 8.6% use it for personal purposes, which is the same percentage of those who observed classmates using their phones during lectures. In addition, 4.3% report that they cannot sit in the classroom without checking their phones, 2.9% receive calls or messages that distract them, and the

same percentage believe that phone distraction affects their performance during the lesson. Meanwhile, only 1.4% admit that they think about their phone when the Internet or connection is unavailable, and no cases of anger were recorded when the use of phones was restricted in the classroom.

These findings show that students in the classroom use their smartphones cautiously, but think more about the device than the lecture. The large percentage (40%) who keep the phone on silent yet constantly check it reflects symptoms of anxiety, confusion, and pressure inside the classroom. Students remain connected to their devices, checking calls and messages through virtual space. These behaviors are considered one of the indicators of nomophobia. The group that uses the phone for academic purposes (11.4%) represents the positive use of technology in scientific research; however, this percentage remains small in comparison with the number of students who use it negatively.

These findings also indicate that the smartphone has become an important tool for academic purposes in classrooms, yet it simultaneously represents a barrier to concentration, discipline, and academic success. This may explain the unsatisfactory academic outcomes at the end of the semester.

Do you consider yourself addicted to your phone?

The results show that 38.2% of students consider themselves somewhat addicted to their phones, which is the same percentage of those who completely deny being addicted (38.2%), while 23.7% openly admit that they are addicted to their smartphones. Most students are well aware of their unusual attachment to their smartphones, yet they deny labeling it as "addiction," possibly out of fear of acknowledgment or in an attempt to minimize the problem. This pattern aligns with the typical indicators used in detecting nomophobia.

The group that openly admits full addiction to the smartphone represents a clear manifestation of the nomophobia phenomenon. Meanwhile, the group that rejects the idea of addiction may still engage in excessive use without realizing it, as they are unaware of its impact on their academic performance and therefore do not consider themselves addicted.

Thus, it can be said that mobile phone addiction does exist within the university environment, and students' behaviors inside the classroom confirm this, although they do not perceive it as a reason behind their academic decline.

Have you ever tried to reduce your smartphone usage?

The results indicate that 69.7% of students have tried at some point to reduce their phone use, while 30.3% have never attempted to do so. This suggests that a portion of students are fully aware of the risks of excessive smartphone use and its impact on academic achievement. Some attempt to reduce their usage but may still struggle to distinguish between positive and negative behavior due to excessive use inside lecture halls.

On the other hand, the group that has never tried to limit smartphone use is the group most vulnerable to the spread of nomophobia. Therefore, the results reveal a clear psychological and behavioral divide within the university environment between awareness of the negative effects of digital addiction and surrender to the device (the smartphone).

13. Conclusion

The results of the study strongly confirm that the phenomenon of nomophobia demonstrates that the mobile phone has become a fundamental and essential element in the lives of university students, especially among young people. Most findings indicate that the majority of students use their phones for extended periods, exceeding its basic use as a communication tool, and extending instead to psychological and behavioral dimensions. The smartphone has become a means to fulfill multiple needs such as entertainment, escape

from reality, isolation, and leisure, making students more vulnerable to the phenomenon of nomophobia.

All of these symptoms contribute to distraction and lack of concentration inside classrooms and lectures, which indicates that smartphone addiction and excessive usage within the university environment may be a direct cause of declining academic performance and reduced positive benefits of communication.

Therefore, it is necessary for the higher education and scientific research sector to adopt measures such as enhancing digital awareness among university students, integrating training courses on the risks of smartphone use in the university setting, and encouraging instructors to modify their interaction strategies with students in order to reduce the spread of nomophobia.

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