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Supportive leadership and co-worker support for nomophobia reduction: Considering affective commitment and HRM practices

Research-in-progress

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Abstract

Given the wide range of mobile and communication devices in everyday life and the day-to-day work of most individuals, people often become dependent on their smartphones - this dependency creates a modern phobia. The discomfort or anxiety caused by being unable to use a smartphone is referred to as "Nomophobia." This paper outlines our approach to survey the impact of supportive leadership and co-worker support on nomophobia, in terms of the role of affective commitment and human resource management (HRM) practices. This study employs structural equation modelling (SEM) based on data obtained from a questionnaire into organizations, with a view to revealing comprehensive findings concerning nomophobia. Additionally, some measures to control nomophobia will be suggested.

Keywords: Nomophobia, Supportive leadership, Co-worker support, Affective commitment, HRM practices, Broaden-and-build theory

1 Introduction

Smartphone users have significantly increased in number and have surpassed six billion; this number is forecast to grow further by several hundred million over the next few years (O'Dea, 2022). Mobile phones have morphed into smartphones with advanced features, namely accessibility to the Internet, with social media, email, and location-based services. These features, along with phone calls and texting functionality, mean smartphones play substantial roles in an individual's life and eventually increase user involvement (Hessari & Nategh, 2022a). Thus, mobile phones have become an inseparable device in people's lives globally (Olson et al., 2022). Additionally, in the workplace, employees are dependent on their mobile phones for work-related tasks such as responding to calls, contacting colleagues, transferring information, and gaining knowledge (Busch, 2008; Smith et al., 2010) along with non-work-related matters such as sending personal messages and checking their social media applications (Chadi et al., 2022). Such behaviour has physical and psychological implications which call for consideration (Al-Saggaf & O'Donnell, 2019). Mobile phone use can however produce certain negative consequences, such as experiencing anxiety and distress when individuals cannot use their smartphone; this negativity is referred to as nomophobia, which is a 21st-century disorder directly resulting from information and communication technologies. Specifically, nomophobia arises when individuals cannot check their phone instantly or frequently due to restrictions at work, workload, supervisor monitoring, clients, and co-worker betrayal (King et al., 2014; Yildirim & Correia, 2015). Besides, the literature ascertains that daily smartphone usage, loneliness, anxiety, and attachment to mobile phones are antecedents of nomophobia (Kara et al., 2021). Nomophobia is a universal concern for both developed and developing economies (e.g., Australia, Iran, U.S.A.) (Amiri & Taghinejad, 2022; Kaviani et al., 2022). Nomophobia is a widespread phenomenon with between 77% and 99% of people suffering from this distress, where the most affected individuals are young adults (Ozdemir et al., 2018). Nomophobia is often reported among service employees (Anggoro & Handiyani, 2022; Daniel, 2022; Hoşgör et al., 2021; Wang & Suh, 2018). Therefore, nomophobia is a widespread phenomenon.

2 Background

Nomophobia creates various drawbacks for people, for it enhances stress, depression, discomfort, anger, anxiety, and insecurity (Darvishi et al., 2019; Yildirim & Correia, 2015). Moreover, nomophobia leads to frustration, fear, and obsessive thoughts and imagination, intensifying underlying mental issues such as fear, dependency, low self-confidence, and creates other social issues (Bragazzi & del Puente, 2014). Furthermore, nomophobia exacerbates mental disorders, panic disorder, emotional alterations, and illegal smartphone use while driving (Kaviani et al., 2022; King et al., 2013, 2014). The disadvantages of nomophobia are not limited to personal life and generate challenges for organizations. Hoşgör et al. (2021) state that nomophobia increases perceived work overload and fear of missing out (FOMO) among employees. It is also reported nomophobia leads to increased emotional exhaustion and thereby decreases job productivity (Wang & Suh, 2018). Moreover, nomophobia decreases self-efficacy and work engagement (Anggoro & Handiyani, 2022; Daniel, 2022). There is little doubt nomophobia creates not only various problems for the individual in their personal life, but also challenges in their workplace, thus there is a need to investigate the influences of nomophobia in the workplace (Wang & Suh, 2018). Furthermore, various pieces of research concentrate on the antecedents and repercussions of mentioned new phobia, even though there is a pivotal need to assess its inhibitors.

Leadership is considered one essential factors in an organization playing a significant role in the job performance of employees (Swanson et al., 2020). Leadership has experienced considerable attention from practitioners and academics and is recognized as the key topic in management science (Sturm et al., 2021). House (1971) states that supportive leadership is an attribute of an effective leader, where supportive leadership is defined as a leader who cares about the welfare and satisfaction of subordinates, which creates a friendly and psychologically supportive work atmosphere. Another chief work-related factor is the role of the co-worker, where the positive role of a co-worker can enhance productivity, thereby increasing economic growth (Eriksson & Lengyel, 2019). One positive characteristic of the co-worker is co-worker support which plays a buffering role in high workload and job demands (Hessari & Nategh, 2022b). The relevance here is that these factors may show influential roles in addressing the nomophobia of employees.

Furthermore, a knowledge-based perspective on managing human resources is an essential need for the survival of each firm in a highly competitive world, and HRM practices are vital in the emerging knowledge economy (Minbaeva, 2013). HRM practices such as mentoring, incentives, and performance appraisal, develop business relationships and team networks, where such practices create a productive environment for sharing and generating knowledge in an organization (Oubrich et al., 2021). Thus,

HRM practices causes improvements in organizational factors and create favorable outputs for firms; besides, assessing emotional impacts of HRM practices in dealing with anxious and stressful feelings at work such as nomophobia is essential. Considering employees' positive emotions toward their organizations, affective commitment is a core element of assessing the emotional level of employees toward their organizations, and a high level of affective commitment is highly associated with job performance and satisfaction enhancement (Mercurio, 2015). Accordingly, assessing the role of HRM practices and affective commitment is essential to know how to decrease the nomophobia level of employees.

To the best of our knowledge, this paper contributes to the literature in four different ways. Firstly, although most papers pay attention to the consequences and antecedents of nomophobia, there is a lacuna in the literature for nomophobia inhibitors; thus, our paper investigates the role of leadership and co-worker support as two inhibitors of nomophobia. Second, there is a gap in the literature concerning environmental resources in organizations for tackling with nomophobia; hence, this paper examines environmental factors for decreasing nomophobia by assessing the role of HRM practices. Third, for filling the literature gap considering emotional resources inhibitors for tackling nomophobia, we consider affective commitment of employees. Fourth, our paper extends the literature regarding nomophobia and its inhibitions while providing a clear comparison between the preventive role of leadership and co-workers in coping with nomophobia. Finally, we add to the literature concerning the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions by assessing the role of leadership support and co-worker support for creating positive emotions and affective commitment to diminish nomophobia as a widespread negative emotion, for positive emotions can decrease negative emotions (Fredrickson, 2001).

3 Theoretical development

Supportive leadership has gained a great deal of attention in various fields such as industrial and organizational psychology, management, and public administration due to its positive impacts on employees and the performance of teams (Kim et al., 2021). A supportive leader can enhance the implementation of new development and augment the progress of tasks to achieve organizational goals satisfactorily (Kim et al., 2021). Furthermore, mentioned leader enhances employees' innovative behaviour and creates a powerful stimulus for employees to use massive open online courses (MOOCs) to gain new skills and abilities (Ahmed et al., 2022).

Worthwhile outcomes of supportive leadership are not limited to work-related aspects. A supportive leader can also motivate employees and increase their job satisfaction, thereby increasing positive emotions between workers and employees (Judge et al., 2004). Moreover, supportive leadership weakens demands, work pressures, and negative emotions. It has also been ascertained supportive leadership reduces job-turnover intention, role conflict, actual turnover, and role ambiguity (Whittington & Bell, 2016). Also, a supportive leader can diminish negative emotions and anxiety (Patzelt et al., 2021). Thus, it is reasonable that a supportive leader can strengthen positive feelings and implementation of development and reduce the level of pressure amongst employees. Based on the above literature, the following hypotheses are considered:

- A1: supportive leadership increases HRM practices.
- A2: supportive leadership increases affective commitment.
- A3: supportive leadership decreases nomophobia.

Regarding organizational support, co-worker support is recognized as one of the most significant psychological resources for each company to alleviate detrimental factors for reinforcing employees' well-being (Blanco-Donoso et al., 2017). Kokoroko & Sanda (2019) state co-worker support remarkably influences job demands and stress, where the positive impacts of co-worker support enhance employees' well-being. Also, co-worker support plays a buffering role in encountering with unpleasant circumstances at work such as supervisor incivility, job insecurity (Shin et al., 2022), and emotional exhaustion (Macias-Velasquez et al., 2021). Hessari & Nategh (2022b) state that co-worker support leads to enhancement in work motivation and work-related factors. Therefore, we can assess the following hypotheses:

- B1: co-worker support augments affective commitment.
- B2: co-worker support augments HRM practices.
- B3: co-worker support reduces nomophobia.

HRM practices are identified as effective measures to help businesses and organizations reinforce employees' performance and commitment. The mentioned practices increase motivation and create a

favourable attitude amongst workers. Additionally, HRM practices received much attention from academia and managers to empower organizations, and those are recognized as vital requirements for each company (Edgar & Geare, 2005). HRM practices strengthen knowledge sharing and innovative behaviour among employees and enhance social capital (Singh et al., 2021). Therefore, it is rational to consider HRM practices as an organizational source for creating desirable outcomes.

Affective commitment is “an affective or emotional attachment to the organization such that the strongly committed individual identifies with, is involved in, and enjoys membership in, the organization” (Meyer & Allen, 1991). We clarify that affective commitment decreases turnover intention, and those employees displaying a high level of affective commitment maintain better relationships with customers, are flexible to change, and learn and work much more productively (Fazio et al., 2017). Hence, the following hypotheses are considered based on the literature:

- C1: HRM practices decreases nomophobia.
- C2 HRM practices mediate the negative relationship between supportive leadership and nomophobia.
- C3: HRM practices mediate the negative relationship between co-worker support and nomophobia.
- D1: affective commitment decreases nomophobia.
- D2: affective commitment mediates the negative relationship between co-worker support and nomophobia.
- D3: affective commitment mediates the negative relationship between supportive leadership and nomophobia.

Our control variables are age, gender, and educational level based on the literature (e.g., Amiri & Taghinejad, 2022; Anggoro & Handiyani, 2022; Hessari & Nategh, 2022a)

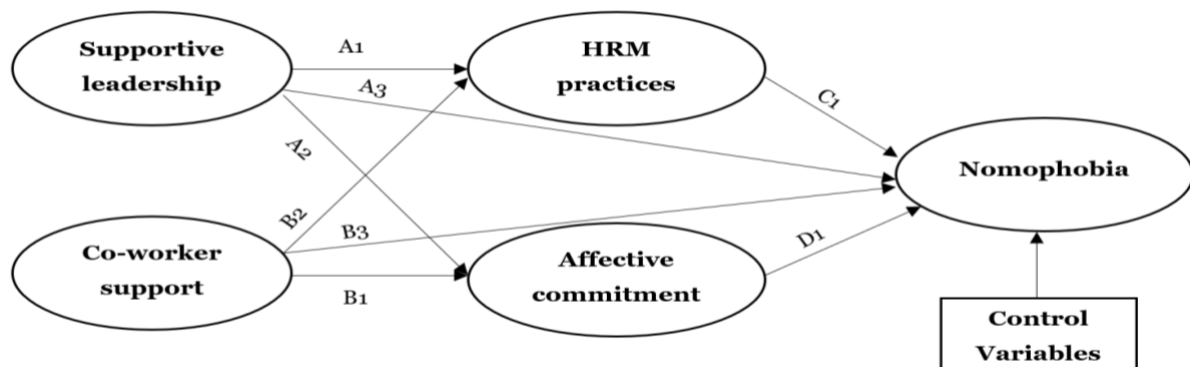


Figure 1: Conceptual framework.

4 Methodology

3.1 Participants and procedure

The present paper is an applied investigation of purposive and descriptive-correlative data collection, which will be analysed using SEM. We obtained a list of educational organizations based in Neyshabur, Iran. Educational organizations put pressure on employees to use their mobile phones regularly to set meetings, seminars, classes, and have consistent communications with others. Also, this circumstance has been turned into an essential need after Covid 19 pandemic. According to (e.g., Wang & Suh, 2018), some 300-200 employees will comprise our sample population in different organizations. Firstly, we will request permission letters from the educational sectors for ethical approve based on the Macquarie university policy. Secondly, we will randomly distribute our questionnaires to assess our questionnaires, and when assessment meet the required criteria, we will randomly distribute our questionnaires among employees by participation of their bosses. Our questionnaires will be distributed on an online platform. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) will be performed to assess the study scales' dimensionality. Furthermore, we will test the reliability and validity of all scales. Descriptive statistics and a correlation matrix will also be produced. Finally, a SEM methodology will be used to identify support for each incorporated hypothesis. We will analyse the non-response bias, reliability (Cronbach's alpha), construct reliability composite reliability (CR), the average variance extracted (AVE), normal distribution (skewness and kurtosis), discriminant validity (heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT)), common method bias (Harman's single factor and controlling for the effects of an

unmeasured latent methods factor). Finally, the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) will be run to reduce certain biases.

3.2 Measurement of constructs

Data will be collected through standard questionnaires already developed and validated in the literature. Low-standard questionnaires with reverse scored and filler items applied to reduce influential biases. Respondents will be requested to determine their degree of agreement with each statement. We will use five-point Likert scales with 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' as anchors. Through self-rating scales we will measure Nomophobia (20 items) (Yildirim & Correia, 2015), supportive leadership (4 items) (Meierhans et al., 2008), co-worker support (4 items) (Zhou & George, 2001), HRM practices (8 items) (Gould-Williams & Davies, 2005), and affective commitment (8 items) (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Please see followed link for questionnaires (<https://tinyurl.com/ACIS-2022>). Given the theoretical development and measure of constructs discussed above, following Saunderson's onion (Saunders et al., 2019), the study will adopt a positivist **philosophy**, and the approach to **theory development** is deductive. Also, the **methodological choice** is Mono method quantitative. The **strategy** adopted will be survey by online platforms, which are performed in several papers with high accuracy in data collection (e.g., Fazio et al., 2017; Wang & Suh, 2018), and the **time horizon** will be Cross-sectional. The time horizon will be the second half of 2022. Finally, the **techniques and procedures** for data collection and analysis will be standard questionnaires through survey and covariance-based Structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) for analysis. Also, we will use Lavaan Package in R and SPSS for assessment.

5 Conclusion

Given we are at a very early stage in our study, we have no results at this stage, however, based on the literature, there is a vital need to assess ways to alleviate the level of nomophobia in organizations. Our paper will investigate the role of supportive leadership and co-worker support in reducing nomophobia and compare these two supports in decreasing mentioned difficulty. Furthermore, this paper will assess HRM practices and affective commitment as mediator elements. Our paper will develop literature regarding nomophobia, its preventers, and the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. Moreover, this paper will help managers and practitioners to find effective ways to enhance the employees' well-being.

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