

## Nomophobia Among Muslim Netizens in Malaysia: Understanding Smartphone Anxiety in a Digital Religious Context

Nomofobia dalam Kalangan Netizen Muslim di Malaysia: Memahami Kebimbangan Terhadap Telefon Pintar dalam Konteks Keagamaan Digital

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Received: 24 January 2026/ Received in revised form: 20 April 2026

Accepted: 22 April 2026/ Published: 2 June 2026

### ABSTRACT

*Dependence on digital technology, particularly smartphones, has become a global concern and is increasingly affecting Malaysian society. Among Muslim netizens, nomophobia defined as the anxiety experienced when losing access to one's smartphone has emerged as a pressing issue due to its implications for daily functioning and religious responsibilities. This study examines the level of nomophobia and explores the factors contributing to phone-related anxiety among Muslim netizens in Malaysia. A cross-sectional survey design was employed, with data collected through questionnaires using a purposive sampling method. Descriptive analysis, including cross-tabulation and level analysis, was conducted using SPSS version 32.0. The findings reveal that a substantial majority of respondents experienced nomophobia, with 94.12% (n = 144) reporting moderate to high levels of anxiety (47.06% moderate and 47.06% high). The primary contributors to this anxiety include fear of losing connectivity and access to information, followed by concerns about reduced convenience and difficulties in communication without a smartphone. These results underscore the central role of smartphones in the daily lives of Muslim netizens. The discomfort and anxiety associated with losing access to these devices point to a growing dependence that may affect psychological well-being and influence daily routines, including aspects related to religious engagement. Greater awareness is therefore needed regarding the behavioural and emotional risks associated with excessive reliance on digital technology. The study offers insights that may inform the Digital Education Policy, particularly in strengthening digital literacy and promoting more balanced and responsible smartphone use.*

*Keywords: Digital; Muslim netizens; nomophobia; religious; smartphone anxiety*

## ABSTRAK

*Kebergantungan terhadap teknologi digital, khususnya telefon pintar, semakin menjadi isu global dan turut memberi kesan ketara kepada masyarakat di Malaysia. Dalam kalangan netizen Muslim, fenomena nomofobia, iaitu perasaan resah dan cemas apabila kehilangan akses kepada telefon pintar, semakin membimbangkan kerana implikasinya bukan sahaja terhadap kehidupan seharian, malah terhadap pelaksanaan tanggungjawab keagamaan. Sehubungan itu, kajian ini bertujuan menilai tahap nomofobia serta mengenal pasti faktor-faktor yang menyumbang kepada kebimbangan berkaitan penggunaan telefon pintar dalam kalangan netizen Muslim di Malaysia. Kajian ini menggunakan reka bentuk tinjauan keratan rentas dengan pengumpulan data melalui soal selidik yang diedarkan menggunakan kaedah persampelan bertujuan. Analisis deskriptif, termasuk tabulasi silang dan analisis tahap, telah dijalankan menggunakan perisian SPSS versi 32.0. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa sebahagian besar responden mengalami nomofobia, dengan 94.12% (n = 144) berada pada tahap kebimbangan sederhana hingga tinggi (masing-masing 47.06% bagi tahap sederhana dan tinggi). Faktor utama yang menyumbang kepada kebimbangan ini ialah ketakutan untuk terputus hubungan dan kehilangan akses kepada maklumat, diikuti oleh kebimbangan terhadap pengurangan kemudahan serta kesukaran berkomunikasi tanpa telefon pintar. Hasil kajian membuktikan peranan penting telefon pintar dalam kehidupan harian netizen Muslim. Perasaan tidak selesa dan keresahan apabila tidak dapat mengakses peranti ini mencerminkan tahap kebergantungan yang semakin meningkat, yang berpotensi menjejaskan kesejahteraan psikologi serta mempengaruhi corak rutin harian, termasuk aspek yang berkaitan dengan penglibatan keagamaan. Oleh itu, peningkatan kesedaran terhadap risiko tingkah laku dan emosi akibat penggunaan teknologi secara berlebihan amat diperlukan.*

*Kata kunci: Digital; keagamaan; kebimbangan terhadap telefon pintar; netizen Muslim; nomofobia*

## INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era of digital globalisation, smartphones have become deeply embedded in everyday life. They are widely used not only for communication, work, and entertainment, but also for educational and religious engagement. In Malaysia, this development is particularly significant, as digital media increasingly shape the daily practices of society. According to DataReportal Global Digital Insights (2024), about 28.8 million Malaysians, or 82.1 percent of the total population, are active social media users. This shows that mobile technology is now deeply integrated into daily routines and social interaction.

Digital transformation in Muslim societies extends beyond technological use to include the shaping of values and ethical awareness, particularly as digital platforms increasingly mediate everyday practices (Nor Hazwani Munirah et al. 2024). In addition, social media has emerged as a dominant source of information, contributing to increased dependency and continuous engagement among users (Dafrizal et al. 2024).

Despite the many benefits offered by this digital connectivity, the growing reliance on smartphones has also contributed to the emergence of new forms of psychological dependency. Within this context, the phenomenon known as nomophobia (no-mobile-phone phobia) has gained increasing scholarly attention. Nomophobia refers to feelings of anxiety, discomfort, or worry that arise when individuals are unable to access or use their smartphones (Yildirim

& Correia 2015).

Previous studies have primarily examined this phenomenon from psychological and behavioural perspectives, linking it to anxiety, dependency, and compulsive smartphone use. Existing studies largely conceptualise nomophobia as a psychological and behavioural issue (Elhai et al. 2021; Samaha & Hawi 2016), with limited attention given to how such dependency intersects with religious practices and spiritual routines in digitally mediated environments.

Yildirim and Correia (2015) also found that nomophobia is related to fear of losing communication, being disconnected from online networks, and not being able to access information immediately. These findings suggest that dependence on smartphones is not only practical in nature, but may also develop into a form of psychological vulnerability, especially in societies where digital devices play a central role in daily life.

For Muslim netizens, smartphone use extends beyond functional and social purposes to include religious engagement. Studies on digital religion show that digital media shape how religion is accessed, practised, and experienced in everyday life. Helland (2005) highlights the shift from using the internet for religious information to active participation, while Campbell and Tsuria (2022) emphasise that digital media are now part of lived religious practice. In the Islamic context, social media and mobile applications are increasingly used for religious learning, identity expression, and engagement with Islamic content (Zaid et al. 2022).

This suggests that smartphones are not only shaping social interaction but are also becoming part of everyday religious life.

However, existing studies largely overlook how smartphone dependency intersects with the religious lives of Muslim netizens. This reveals a theoretical gap, as nomophobia is often treated primarily as a psychological issue without considering its implications within a digital religious context. Mukmin Hakim and Shamsuddin (2024) highlight that digital technologies increasingly influence not only access to information but also the ethical and spiritual dimensions of Muslim netizens' lives. Ramlan and Malkan (2025) argue that digital technologies present both opportunities and challenges for Muslim societies, particularly in shaping religious engagement and ethical awareness.

Elmahjub (2023) argues that emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence require ethical evaluation grounded in Islamic principles, particularly *maṣlahah*, which prioritises human well-being. This perspective is further supported by the need for structured Islamic frameworks in guiding responsible technology use (Aliff et al. 2021).

This study addresses that gap by exploring how smartphone anxiety affects users whose spiritual routines such as accessing Quranic applications and online dakwah are increasingly mediated through digital devices. Hence, this study examines the levels of nomophobia and explores the factors contributing to smartphone-related anxiety among Muslim netizens in Malaysia, while considering the broader implications of digital dependence on their psychological well-being and religious discipline.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### DEFINITION OF NOMOPHOBIA

The term *nomophobia* originates from the phrase “no-mobile-phone phobia” and was first introduced in the UK Post Office Report (2008) to describe the anxiety experienced when individuals lose access to their smartphones. According to Yildirim and Correia (2015), nomophobia refers to feelings of anxiety, discomfort, or distress that arise when individuals are unable to use their smartphones to communicate, access information, or manage daily activities. King et al. (2013) further contend that this phenomenon extends beyond a purely technological concern, instead representing a form of modern psychological disturbance rooted in a high level

of dependence on digital media and a persistent desire to remain constantly connected (*permanent connectivity*).

The literature indicates that nomophobia comprises several key dimensions. Yildirim and Correia (2015) categorised the phenomenon into four main components: (i) fear of losing access to information, (ii) inability to communicate, (iii) loss of social connectedness, and (iv) discomfort arising from the inability to use smartphone functions. These four dimensions subsequently formed the basis for the development of the Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q) by Yildirim and Correia (2015), which is now widely used to assess users' levels of anxiety related to smartphone use.

The rapid development of digital technology has changed how people think, interact, and manage their daily activities. While these changes have improved communication and access to information, they have also contributed to emotional and behavioural pressures. International research by Yildirim and Correia (2015) shows that nomophobia is becoming more common among adolescents and young adults, particularly in settings with high levels of technology use. Further research by Gezgin (2018) found a significant relationship between nomophobia, social media addiction, and declining psychological well-being. This issue became more noticeable after the COVID-19 pandemic, when many daily activities and social interactions moved into digital spaces (Velthoven et al. 2018).

### PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF SMARTPHONE DEPENDENCE WITHIN A DIGITAL RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

The growing reliance on smartphones and digital platforms can be explained through media dependency theory, which highlights how individuals depend on media to fulfil informational, social, and psychological needs. This dependency is further intensified in digital environments where social media functions as a primary channel for communication and information exchange (Dafrizal et al. 2024).

As this dependency becomes increasingly embedded in everyday life, it gives rise to various psychological consequences associated with excessive smartphone use. Smartphone dependence has become one of the most visible psychological concerns in contemporary digital life. Previous studies have shown that excessive smartphone use is associated with anxiety, stress, sleep disturbance,

reduced concentration, and lower psychological well-being (Bhattacharya et al. 2019; Samaha & Hawi 2016). This pattern is often reinforced by compulsive checking behaviour, where users repeatedly check their devices even without any urgent reason or clear purpose (Kuss & Griffiths 2017). Over time, such behaviour may affect emotional stability, attention span, and the ability to manage daily responsibilities in a balanced way. Beyond its psychological and social effects, smartphone dependence may also influence personal balance and religious engagement in everyday life.

Within a Muslim digital environment, smartphones are used not only for communication and information seeking, but also for accessing religious reminders, Quran applications, Islamic lectures, and faith-related networks. Digital platforms facilitate rapid information-seeking behaviour, allowing users to access content quickly and efficiently. However, this also increases exposure to misinformation, requiring critical evaluation of information sources (Haekal Fajri et al. 2019).

As digital media become embedded in lived religious practice (Campbell & Tsuria 2022) and function as key spaces for Islamic learning and communication (Solahudin & Fakhruroji 2020), digital platforms also shape Muslim engagement with religious content and authority (Zaid et al. 2022). Setiyo et al. (2025) note that digital media and AI technologies enhance access to Islamic learning materials and increase engagement in religious education.

Therefore, smartphone anxiety among Muslim netizens should be understood within a digital religious context, where dependence on technology may affect psychological well-being, social relationships, and religious engagement simultaneously.

Campbell and Tsuria (2022) argue that digital media are now embedded in everyday religious practice. In the context of Muslim netizens, smartphones are used not only for communication, entertainment, and information seeking, but also for accessing religious reminders, Quran applications, online lectures, and dakwah content. Zaid et al. (2022) further demonstrate that digital platforms shape Muslim engagement with Islamic content, religious authority, and expressions of faith. This suggests that emotional dependence on smartphones may also influence how Muslim netizens manage their spiritual routines and inner balance. Excessive reliance on digital devices may influence users' attention and engagement in daily routines, including

those related to meaningful and reflective practices.

Nevertheless, the digital religion literature has yet to explicitly examine how technology-induced anxiety, such as nomophobia, may reshape patterns of religious engagement. This reflects a conceptual gap between studies on digital religion and research on psychological dependence on mobile technologies.

## METHODOLOGY

The unit of analysis in this study consists of individual Muslim netizens in Malaysia who use smartphones. Each respondent is treated as a separate unit of analysis in examining the level of nomophobia and the factors associated with smartphone-related anxiety among Muslim netizens. This study employs a survey research design using a quantitative approach. This design was selected to systematically assess the levels and determinants of nomophobia among respondents, allowing for statistical analyses to be conducted on data collected from a large sample within a relatively short period of time.

The main source of information for this study is primary data obtained directly from the respondents, namely Muslim netizens in Malaysia. The data were collected using a questionnaire adapted from the Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q). To ensure clarity and suitability for the target population, the original NMP-Q developed by Yildirim and Correia (2015) was translated into Malay. The data collection process was carried out over a period of five months, from April to August 2025, to allow sufficient time for the distribution of the questionnaire and the collection of responses from the targeted respondents.

The instrument is organised into three key sections: respondents' background information, their patterns of smartphone usage, and their level of nomophobia. Reliability testing showed that the questionnaire achieved a high Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.936, indicating strong internal consistency and confirming that the instrument is trustworthy for measuring nomophobia. The choice to use the NMP-Q is supported by previous research, as it is widely recognised as a relevant and effective self-report tool for assessing smartphone-related anxiety in today's digital context (King et al. 2013; Maliha & Md. Ashraful 2020).

The data for this study were collected online using Google Forms. The questionnaire was shared

through various social media platforms and personal networks to reach respondents who matched the focus of the study. A purposive sampling technique was used because the study specifically involved Muslim netizens in Malaysia who actively use smartphones.

This approach was appropriate as it allowed the researcher to select respondents based on criteria relevant to the objectives of the study. To be included, respondents had to be Muslims, live in Malaysia, use a smartphone, and be active users of the internet or social media. Only those who met all of these criteria were included in the sample. In total, 153 respondents participated in the study.

The data in this study were analysed using descriptive statistical methods, including cross-

tabulation and level analysis, to explore how nomophobia is distributed among respondents. All data were processed using SPSS version 32.0. Each respondent's nomophobia score was calculated based on their answers to 16 items measured on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated "Strongly Disagree" and 5 indicated "Strongly Agree."

Respondents completed all 16 items, and their total score was obtained by adding the points assigned to each response. This resulted in an overall score ranging from 16 to 80. To provide a clearer picture of the respondents' nomophobia levels, these total scores were then grouped into four categories, allowing the findings to be interpreted more meaningfully.

TABLE 1. Score Values for Measuring the Level of Nomophobia

Values Score	Interpretation
16-17	No Nomophobia
18-37	Low
38-58	Moderate
59-80	High

Source: Research data (2025)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

A total of 153 respondents were involved in this study, comprising 50 males (32.7%) and 103 females (67.3%), indicating a higher representation of female participants (Table 2). In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents (77.1%) were between 17 and 27 years old, reflecting the strong presence of younger users within the sample. This is consistent with current digital trends, where younger individuals are more actively engaged with smartphones and online platforms.

All respondents identified as Malay and Muslim, which aligns with the study's focus on Muslim netizens in Malaysia. This homogeneity is important as it allows the findings to be interpreted within a specific socio-religious context. The majority of respondents also possessed tertiary education, with 73.9 percent holding a Bachelor's degree, suggesting that the sample represents a relatively educated group of digital users.

These demographic patterns indicate that the findings largely reflect the experiences of young, educated Muslim netizens whose daily lives are closely intertwined with digital technology.

TABLE 2. Demographic Analysis

Variables	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	
Gender	Male	50	32.7
	Female	103	67.3
Age	17-27	118	77.1
	28-38	21	13.7
	39-48	7	4.6
	49-58	7	4.6
Race	Malay	153	100
Religion	Islam	153	100
Education	Upper Secondary (SPM/SPVM)	15	9.8
	Pre University (STPM/ Diploma)	17	11.1
	Undergraduate (Bachelor's Degree)	113	73.9
	Postgraduate (Master/PhD)	8	5.2

Source: Research data (2025)

## SMARTPHONE USAGE PATTERNS

The findings on a) Duration of Smartphone Use, b) Purpose of Smartphone Use, and c) Frequently Used Smartphone Applications reveal a range of usage patterns that mirror the current digital habits of the Muslim community in Malaysia (Table 3). The findings reveal that smartphone use is deeply embedded in the daily routines of respondents. A substantial proportion (71.2%) reported using their smartphones between 6 and 10 hours per day, while 17 percent used them for up to 19 hours daily. This pattern reflects a high level of digital immersion, indicating that smartphones play a central role in structuring everyday activities.

In terms of usage purposes, social media (86.3%), messaging (90.2%), and communication (73.2%) emerged as the most dominant activities. These findings highlight that smartphones function as primary tools for maintaining social connectivity. These patterns reflect a broader form of media dependency, where users rely heavily on digital platforms to maintain communication, access information, and fulfil social needs (Dafrizal Samsudin et al. 2024). At the same time, a notable proportion of respondents also reported using smartphones for religious learning (42.5%) and accessing information (52.3%), suggesting that mobile devices are increasingly used for knowledge acquisition.

TABLE 3. Respondents' Smartphone Usage

Smartphone Usage		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Daily Duration of Smartphone Use	1 to 5 hours per day	18	11.8
	6 to 10 hours per day	109	71.2
	11 to 19 hours per day	26	17.0
	20 hours and above per day	0	0
How Smartphones Are Used	Sending messages	138	90.2
	Making phone calls	112	73.2
	Religious Learning	65	42.5
	Information and latest updates	80	52.3
	Social media	132	86.3
	Entertainment	55	35.9
	Others (Shopping, playing digital games, accessing religious content and more)	21	13.7
Apps Most Frequently Used	Whatsapp	133	86.9
	Instagram	106	69.3
	Facebook	45	29.4
	Youtube	36	23.5
	Twitter (X)	54	35.3
	Tiktok	100	65.4
	Others (such as Telegram, Threads, gaming apps, and more)	8	5.2

Source: Research data (2025)

The analysis of smartphone usage purposes shows that communication remains the main reason respondents rely on their devices. A large majority of respondents (n = 138, 90.2%) used messaging applications such as WhatsApp and Telegram, while 112 respondents (73.2%) used their phones to make calls. Social media also plays a significant role, with 86.3 percent of respondents using platforms such as Instagram and TikTok for social interaction and entertainment. In addition, 52.3 percent used their smartphones to stay updated with current information, and 42.5 percent used them for

religious learning. Social media also functions as an important space for accessing and engaging with religious information, reinforcing its role in shaping users' understanding and everyday practices (Haekal Fajri et al. 2019).

Within a Muslim digital context, these usage patterns carry broader implications. Platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are not only used for social interaction and entertainment, but also serve as channels for the circulation of Islamic content, including short reminders, religious lectures, and dakwah messages.

This reflects the growing role of social media as a space where religious knowledge is accessed, shared, and experienced in everyday life.

Mohammad Aizat et al. (2025) highlight that social media platforms function as important spaces for religious expression and dakwah, although algorithm-driven content may also shape users' understanding of Islamic values. The integration of these platforms into daily routines shows that smartphone use among Muslim netizens goes beyond functional purposes. It is closely linked to both social and religious engagement, where dependence reflects the need to stay connected not

only socially but also to digitally mediated religious content and communities.

#### NOMOPHOBIA LEVELS

The results indicate that all respondents experienced some level of nomophobia, with the majority falling within the moderate and high categories. Specifically, 47.06 percent of respondents were classified as having moderate nomophobia, while another 47.06 percent were in the high category. Only a small proportion (5.88%) reported low levels of nomophobia (Table 4).

TABLE 4. Level of Respondents' Nomophobia

Nomophobia Levels	Score Values	Frequency ( <i>f</i> )	Percentage (%)
No Nomophobia	16-17	0	0
Low	18-37	9	5.88
Moderate	38-58	72	47.06
High	59-80	72	47.06

Source: Research data (2025)

These findings suggest that smartphone dependence is not only widespread but has become a significant concern among Muslim netizens in Malaysia. From a psychological perspective, individuals with moderate to high levels of nomophobia are more likely to experience anxiety, discomfort, and stress when separated from their devices. This reflects the extent to which smartphones have become integrated into users' daily routines and emotional regulation.

Dependence on smartphones among the younger generation is often tied to the nature of their increasingly digital lifestyles, where technology has become a central part of how they communicate, entertain themselves, and even learn. A study by Kanmani et al. (2017) found that young people especially those aged 18 to 25 are more prone to nomophobia because they use their smartphones extensively and almost continuously, particularly for accessing social media and various online applications. The study also points out that social pressure and the desire to stay constantly "connected" play an important role in strengthening this dependence.

These findings are consistent with Velthoven et al. (2018), who noted that younger individuals tend to rely on smartphones for both information seeking and maintaining social connections. In contrast, older users generally use their devices in a more functional manner, mainly for work-related tasks or basic communication. As younger users engage with

their smartphones more intensively, they are more likely to experience anxiety when access to their devices is limited, indicating a clear relationship between age and the level of nomophobia.

Subramani et al. (2017) further highlight that spending more than five hours per day on a smartphone, a pattern commonly observed among younger individuals, is strongly associated with a higher risk of addiction and nomophobia. Taken together, these findings suggest that young users are particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of heavy dependence on mobile technology. This pattern suggests that dependence on smartphones among Muslim netizens may also be linked to the need to remain connected not only socially, but also to digitally mediated forms of religious content and engagement.

#### AGE AND GENDER DIFFERENCES IN NOMOPHOBIA

The cross-tabulation analysis (Table 5) shows that younger respondents, particularly those aged 17 to 27, recorded the highest levels of nomophobia. Within this group, 38.6 percent experienced high nomophobia, while 34 percent reported moderate levels. This suggests that younger individuals are more heavily reliant on smartphones, making them more vulnerable to anxiety when separated from their devices.

TABLE 5. Cross-Tabulation of Nomophobia Levels by Age Group

Age	Number of Respondents	Low Nomophobia Level (%)	Moderate Nomophobia Level (%)	High Nomophobia Level (%)
17-27 years old	118	7 (4.6%)	52 (34%)	59 (38.6%)
28-38 years old	21	1 (0.7%)	13 (8.5%)	7 (4.6%)
39-48 years old	7	0	4 (2.6%)	3 (2%)
49-58 years old	7	1 (0.7%)	3 (2%)	3(2%)

Source: Research data (2025)

This pattern can be understood in relation to the digital lifestyles of younger users, who rely on smartphones for communication, entertainment, and information access. In addition, younger users are more actively engaged with social media platforms, which further strengthens their dependence on continuous connectivity.

In contrast, older respondents showed relatively lower levels of nomophobia, reflecting a more functional and less immersive use of smartphones. However, the presence of moderate levels of nomophobia among older users indicates that digital dependence is gradually becoming more widespread across age groups.

Top of FormBottom of FormTable 6 presents the comparison of nomophobia levels between male and female respondents, and the findings reveal clear differences in how each group depends on their smartphones. The results show that 69.9 per cent of women reported a high level of nomophobia, compared with 50 per cent of men. At the moderate level, the gap is much smaller, with 46 per cent of men and 47.6 per cent of women experiencing moderate nomophobia. Overall, the data suggests

that women generally show a higher level of dependence on mobile technology than men.

Several factors may help explain why these differences occur. Women tend to use their smartphones more frequently for social purposes staying active on social media, communicating through messaging apps, and keeping up with personal and professional relationships. When smartphones become a key tool for meeting social and emotional needs, the influence of these devices naturally increases in a person's daily life.

This helps explain why women may experience higher levels of nomophobia, as they rely more on their phones to stay connected. Psychological and cultural factors may also play a role. Women are often more sensitive to social interactions and may feel anxious when they are unable to connect through the technology that keeps them linked to others. Culturally, women may face stronger expectations to maintain communication and relationships, which can increase their reliance on mobile devices. Taken together, these factors offer a clearer understanding of why women in this study showed higher levels of nomophobia compared with men.

TABLE 6. Cross-Tabulation Analysis of Nomophobia Levels Across Gender Groups

Gender	Number of Respondents	Low Nomophobia Level (%)	Moderate Nomophobia Level (%)	High Nomophobia Level (%)
Male	50	2 (4%)	23 (46%)	25 (50%)
Female	103	7 (6.8%)	49 (47.6%)	72 (69.9%)

Source: Research data (2025)

Studies by Mohd Hairulnisam et al. (2021) and Jeff and Daniel (2019) reveal interesting differences in how men and women experience nomophobia. Mohd Hairulnisam et al. (2021) found that men showed higher levels of nomophobia than women. However, Jeff and Daniel (2019) reported the opposite, noting that women were more likely to experience higher levels of nomophobia. Although the findings differ, both studies emphasise the same point: nomophobia is a meaningful issue that affects individuals across genders. These variations suggest

that dependence on mobile technology is not limited to one gender and highlight how deeply technology has become embedded in the daily lives of both men and women.

#### SMARTPHONE ANXIETY: UNDERSTANDING THE FACTORS THAT LEAD TO NOMOPHOBIA

The analysis identifies four key dimensions that explain the level of nomophobia among respondents, namely the inability to access information, the

inability to use smartphone features comfortably, the inability to communicate, and the feeling of being disconnected from others. These dimensions provide a clearer understanding of how different aspects of smartphone use contribute to anxiety when access to the device is limited.

In a digital religious context, access to information may include not only general knowledge but also religious content such as Islamic reminders, Quran applications, and online lectures. As digital media increasingly shape how religion is accessed and experienced (Campbell & Tsuria 2022), the inability to access smartphones may also limit engagement with such content. This suggests that the role of smartphones extends beyond functional use to include support for digitally mediated religious learning and engagement.

The dimension related to feeling disconnected from others recorded the highest mean score (mean = 2.82), indicating a stronger emotional and social dependence on smartphones. This reflects the importance of continuous connectivity in maintaining relationships. Previous studies have shown that the fear of being disconnected is closely related to nomophobia and is often driven by the need to remain socially present in digital environments (Przybylski et al. 2013; Wegmann et al. 2017).

Within the context of Muslim netizens, this sense of disconnection may also involve reduced participation in online communities centred on shared values and religious content. As social media serves both social and religious functions, losing access to smartphones may lead to a sense of disconnection not only from others but also from meaningful digital engagement. Setiyo et al. (2025) emphasise that digital platforms play a crucial role in facilitating access to Islamic knowledge and religious learning.

In contrast, the dimensions related to the inability to use smartphone features comfortably (mean = 2.26) and the inability to communicate (mean = 2.23) recorded lower levels of nomophobia. This suggests that respondents are less likely to

experience anxiety when they cannot use additional features or communication tools. These aspects, while important, appear to play a secondary role compared to the need for information and social connection.

Overall, the findings indicate that nomophobia among respondents is primarily driven by two key factors; the need for immediate access to information and the desire to remain socially connected. Dafrizal et al. (2024) note that continuous reliance on digital media strengthens emotional attachment to smartphones, particularly as primary sources of information and social interaction. Within Muslim societies, this dependency may also influence value systems and everyday practices, including those related to religious engagement, as digital platforms increasingly mediate ethical awareness and social behaviour (Nor Hazwani Munirah et al. 2024). Within a Muslim context, this dependency extends beyond functional use to include digitally mediated religious engagement, suggesting that nomophobia may also influence the continuity of spiritual routines.

These findings support the view that smartphone dependence is shaped not only by functional needs but also by emotional and cognitive attachment to digital environments (Elhai et al. 2021). In a digital religious context, this dependence may also be linked to the role of smartphones in facilitating access to religious content and participation in digitally mediated forms of engagement.

From an Islamic ethical perspective, technological use must be aligned with the principle of *maṣlahah*, ensuring that it contributes to human well-being rather than harm (Elmahjub 2023). From an Islamic perspective, excessive dependence on digital devices may challenge the principle of *tawazun* (balance) in daily life, where spiritual practices risk being mediated and potentially disrupted by technological reliance. This highlights the importance of balancing digital dependency with ethical and spiritual considerations in contemporary Muslim societies.

TABLE 7. Understanding the Key Factors That Lead to Nomophobia

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Levels of Nomofobia
Being Unable to Access Information	2.58	0.92	Moderate
Being Unable to Use Smartphone Features Comfortably	2.26	0.96	Low
Being Unable to Communicate with Others	2.23	0.83	Low
Feeling Disconnected from Social Connections	2.82	1.00	Moderate

Source: Research data (2025)

## CONCLUSIONS

This study positions nomophobia as a contemporary concern that extends beyond psychological dependence on smartphones to reflect broader transformations in digitally mediated lifestyles. Within the context of Muslim netizens in Malaysia, smartphone use is embedded not only in social interaction and information access, but also in forms of digitally mediated religious engagement.

By situating nomophobia within a digital religious context, this study offers a more nuanced understanding of how technological dependence intersects with everyday social and religious practices. It highlights the need to view smartphone use not merely as a functional tool, but as part of a wider ecosystem that shapes behaviour, interaction, and meaning in contemporary life.

These insights underscore the importance of fostering balanced and mindful engagement with digital technologies. Future research should further explore how specific dimensions of religious engagement are shaped within digital environments, particularly in understanding the evolving relationship between technology and lived religious experience in Muslim societies.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was conducted with support from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia through the Translation Grant (TR-UKM) under project code UKM-TR2024-06.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors were involved in the development of the study framework, research procedures, and the analysis and interpretation of findings. The manuscript was finalised through collective input and agreement from all authors.

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) GENERATED TEXT DECLARATION

This article has utilized artificial intelligence (AI) technology, specifically ChatGPT, as a support tool in drafting and content review. All facts have been re-verified by the author to ensure accuracy and contextual relevance.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## ETHICS APPROVAL AND AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH

The researchers adhered fully to the research ethics guidelines established by the Research Ethics Committee of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (RECUKM). All procedures involving human participants were conducted in compliance with the standards approved by the committee. Informed consent and voluntary agreement to participate were obtained from all respondents prior to data collection.

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