

# WFOT Congress 2026

9-12 FEBRUARY BANGKOK, THAILAND

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## The Relationship Between Nomophobia, Social Skills, and Occupational Balance in University Students

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No financial disclosures.

12.02.2026

# Background

Smartphones are widely used by university students for academic, social, and leisure purposes.

Excessive smartphone use may lead to **nomophobia**, defined as the fear of being without a mobile phone.

Nomophobia has been associated with changes in **social interaction patterns** and **daily occupational engagement**.

However, its relationship with **social skills** and **occupational balance** remains insufficiently explored from an occupational therapy perspective.

*As occupational therapists, we know that occupational balance is essential for health, well-being, and meaningful participation in daily life.*

*However, in recent years, digital technology and especially smartphone use have become deeply embedded in daily routines, particularly among university students.*

*Excessive or problematic smartphone use may disrupt daily routines, role balance, and social participation.*

*Understanding nomophobia is important for occupational therapy because it may act as a hidden barrier to participation, occupational balance, and social engagement.*

## Why This Matters for Occupational Therapy ?

- Occupational balance is essential for health, well-being, and participation.
- Disruptions in digital habits may negatively influence:
  - daily routines
  - role balance
  - social participation
- Understanding nomophobia helps occupational therapists:
  - identify participation barriers
  - develop digital life balance interventions

# Aim of the Study



**The aim of this study** was to examine the relationship between:

- nomophobia,
- social skills, and
- occupational balance among university students.

# Method

**DESIGN: CROSS-SECTIONAL, CORRELATIONAL STUDY**

**PARTICIPANTS:**

**179 UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

**RECRUITED FROM VARIOUS UNIVERSITIES**

**DATA COLLECTION: SELF-REPORT QUESTIONNAIRES**

# Assessment Tools



**Nomophobia Scale (NMP-Q):**  
Measures severity of  
smartphone-related anxiety



**Social Skills Inventory – Short Form (SSI-SF):** Assesses multiple dimensions of social skills



**Activity-Role Balance Questionnaire (ARBQ):**  
Evaluates occupational balance  
across daily roles and activities

# Inclusion-Exclusion Criterias



The inclusion criteria for the participants were to be studying at a university in Turkey, aged between 18 and 25, and actively using digital devices.

Individuals with any physical or mental diagnosis were excluded from the study.

# Statistical Analysis



Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participant characteristics and scale scores.



Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between nomophobia, social skills, and occupational balance.



All analyses were performed using SPSS software. Statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ .

# Results



Nomophobia showed a **positive correlation** with social skills ( $r = 0.254, p < 0.05$ )



Nomophobia showed a **negative correlation** with occupational balance ( $r = -0.172, p < 0.05$ )



Higher nomophobia levels were associated with:



increased social skill scores



reduced occupational balance

# Results

NMP-Q		Losing Communication		Not Being Online	Not feeling comfortable	Not being able to access information	NMP-Q Total	ARBQ
SSI-SF subdimensions								
Emotional expressivity	r	0,074	-0,082	0,120	0,120	-0,005	0,036	-0,015
	p	0,326	0,277	0,111	0,111	0,950	0,629	0,843
Emotional sensitivity	p	<b>0,155</b> <b>0,039*</b>	<b>0,144</b> <b>0,05*</b>	<b>0,188</b> <b>0,012*</b>	<b>0,188</b> <b>0,012*</b>	<b>0,206</b> <b>0,006*</b>	<b>0,222</b> <b>0,003*</b>	0,043 0,564
Emotional control	r	<b>-0,179</b>	0,032	<b>-0,192</b>	<b>-0,192</b>	-0,007	<b>-0,116</b>	<b>0,182</b>
	p	<b>0,016</b>	0,674	<b>0,010*</b>	<b>0,010*</b>	0,922	<b>0,021*</b>	<b>0,015*</b>
Social expressivity	p	<b>0,157</b> <b>0,036*</b>	<b>0,142</b> <b>0,05*</b>	<b>0,156</b> <b>0,037*</b>	<b>0,156</b> <b>0,037*</b>	<b>0,176</b> <b>0,019*</b>	<b>0,202</b> <b>0,007*</b>	<b>0,199</b> <b>0,007*</b>
Social sensitivitiy	p	<b>0,252</b> <b>0,001**</b>	<b>0,243</b> <b>0,001**</b>	<b>0,364</b> <b>0,000**</b>	<b>0,364</b> <b>0,000**</b>	<b>0,310</b> <b>0,000**</b>	<b>0,378</b> <b>0,000**</b>	<b>-0,252</b> <b>0,001**</b>
Social control	r	-0,030	0,012	-0,083	-0,083	-0,081	-0,057	<b>0,324</b>
	p	0,695	0,874	0,267	0,267	0,282	0,451	<b>0,000**</b>
SSI-SF Total	p	<b>0,161</b> <b>0,031*</b>	<b>0,191</b> <b>0,01*</b>	<b>0,209</b> <b>0,005*</b>	<b>0,209</b> <b>0,005*</b>	<b>0,231</b> <b>0,002**</b>	<b>0,254</b> <b>0,001**</b>	<b>0,154</b> <b>0,04*</b>
ARBQ	r	0,122	0,104	-0,056	<b>-0,199</b>	<b>-0,163</b>	<b>-0,172</b>	
	p			0,460	<b>0,008*</b>	<b>0,029*</b>	<b>0,021*</b>	

NMP-Q: Nomophobia Questionnaire; SSI-SF: Social Skills Inventory- Short Form; ARBQ: Activity-Role Balance Questionnaire. r: Correlation coeffiecent. \*\*<0.01; \*<0.05



# Results

- All NMP-Q subdimensions -losing communication, not being online, not feeling comfortable, and not being able to access information—were most strongly related to emotional and social sensitivity.
- Higher emotional sensitivity was consistently associated with greater nomophobia, indicating increased vulnerability to communication loss and online disconnection.

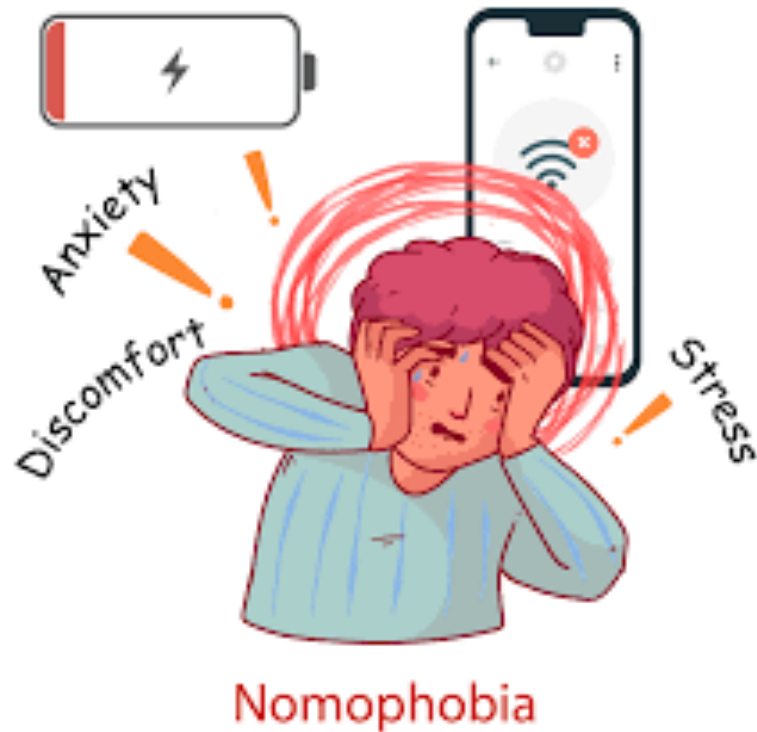
# Results

- Regarding the SSI-SF subdimensions, **social sensitivity** exhibited the strongest and most consistent positive correlations with all NMP-Q subdimensions and the NMP-Q total score, followed by **social expressivity**, which showed moderate but significant associations, particularly with losing communication and access to information.
- In contrast, **emotional control** and **social control** were weakly or non-significantly related to most nomophobia subdimensions.

NMP-Q	NMP-Q Total
SSI-SF subdimensions	
Emotional expressivity	0,036 0,629
Emotional sensitivity	<b>0,222</b> <b>0,003*</b>
Emotional control	<b>-0,116</b> <b>0,021*</b>
Social expressivity	<b>0,202</b> <b>0,007*</b>
Social sensitivity	<b>0,378</b> <b>0,000**</b>
Social control	-0,057 0,451
SSI-SF Total	<b>0,254</b> <b>0,001**</b>
ARBQ	<b>-0,172</b> <b>0,021*</b>

NMP-Q: Nomophobia Questionnaire; SSI-SF: Social Skills Inventory- Short Form; ARBQ: Activity-Role Balance Questionnaire. r: Correlation coefficient, \*\*<0.01. \*<0.05

# Results



- Higher nomophobia—especially difficulties related to *not feeling comfortable* and *not being able to access information*—was significantly associated with poorer **occupational balance**, highlighting the potential impact of smartphone-related anxiety on daily role participation.

NMP-Q		Losing Communication	Not Being Online	Not feeling comfortable	Not being able to access information	NMP-Q Total
SSI-SF subdimensions						
ARBQ	r	0,122	-0,056	<b>-0,199</b>	<b>-0,163</b>	<b>-0,172</b>
	p	0,104	0,460	<b>0,008*</b>	<b>0,029*</b>	<b>0,021*</b>

NMP-Q: Nomophobia Questionnaire; SSI-SF: Social Skills Inventory- Short Form; ARBQ: Activity-Role Balance Questionnaire. r: Correlation coefficient, \*\*<0.01; \*<0.05

# Discussion

Nomophobia may support **certain social interaction skills**, particularly in digitally mediated contexts.

However, increased nomophobia appears to interfere with:

balanced daily routines

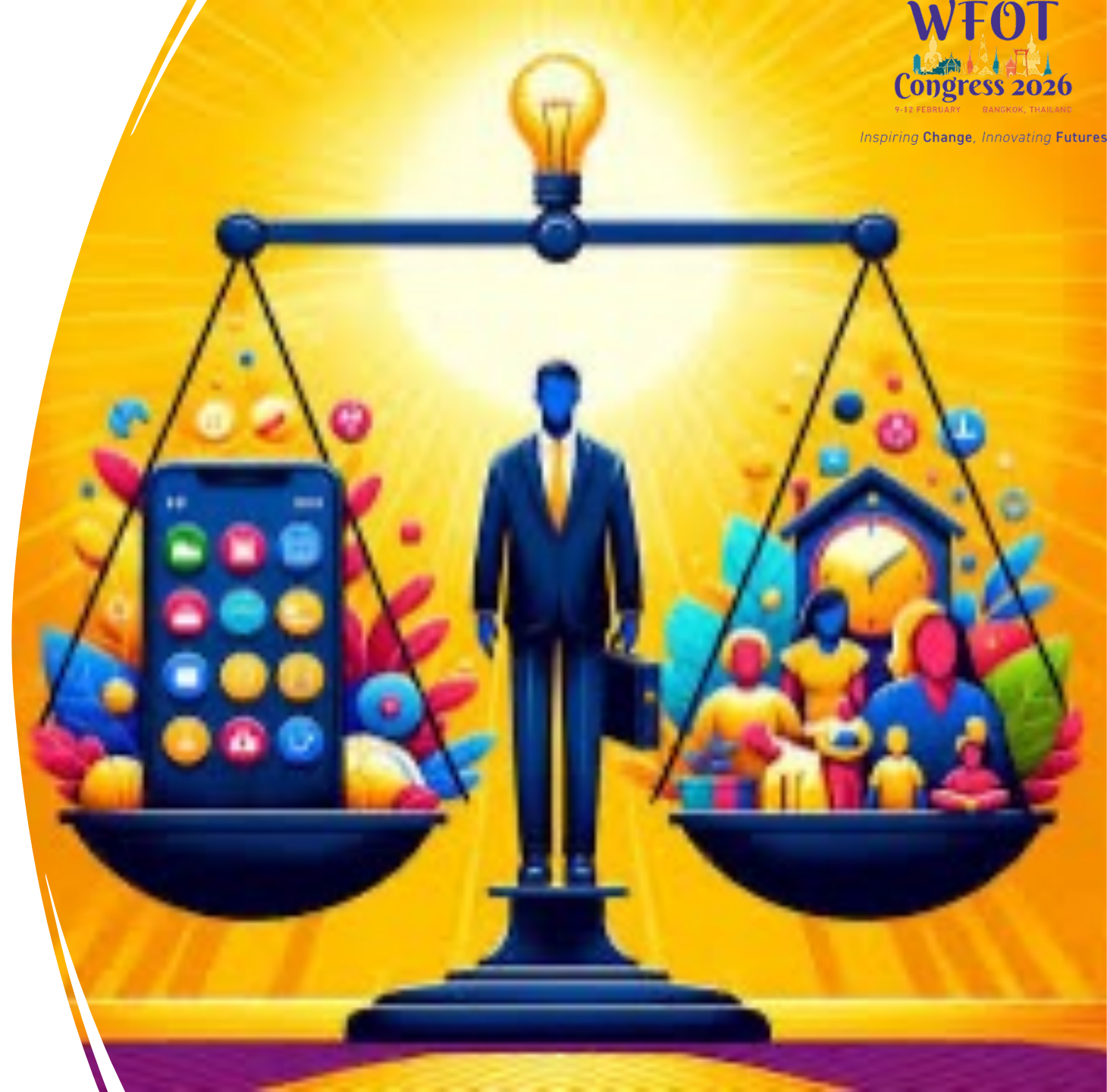
role distribution

occupational satisfaction

These findings highlight the **dual impact** of smartphone use on occupation.

# Conclusion

- Nomophobia is significantly related to both social skills and occupational balance.
- While it may enhance certain aspects of social skills, it negatively affects balance among daily occupations.
- Occupational therapy interventions focusing on digital regulation may promote healthier occupational engagement.



# Implications for Occupational Therapy

Occupational therapists can:

- assess the impact of nomophobia on daily occupations
- support clients in establishing **digital life balance**
- design interventions targeting:
  - healthy technology use
  - social participation
  - occupational balance
  - University students represent a key population for preventive OT interventions.





*Thank you for attention*



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