NOMOPHOBIA AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDER OF THE MODERN AGE: EFFECTS ON ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

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Abstract - Considering the fact that nomophobia has become very widespread across the world, and the importance of the effects of anxiety and fear on individuals' attitudes and behaviors, this study examined the influences of nomophobia on organizational commitment feelings of employees. To test its hypotheses developed based on attentional control theory, the study used the data collected from 398 teachers employed in public and private schools. The results indicate that nomophobia negatively influenced organizational commitment feelings of employees. The findings are considered to be useful in increasing awareness of researchers in the field of organizational behavior on nomophobia, a psychological disorder of the modern age. In practical terms, we suggest that organizations should provide the psychological and social support needed by nomophobic employees, and review their organizational policies, practices and discourses for stimuli that may trigger nomophobia-based anxiety and fears of such employees.

Keywords - Nomophobia, Organizational Commitment, Mobile /Smart Phones, Anxiety, Attentional Control Theory

I. INTRODUCTION

While there is a growing body of literature demonstrating the negative effects of smartphones such as addiction to smartphones [1, 2, 3],their problematic use [4, 5] or their excessive use [6], we cannot find out any study in the national and/or international literature that consider nomophobia as an 'anxiety disorder' and examine the possible effects of 'nomophobia-induced worries and fears' on the attitudes and behaviors of employees within the organization. Furthermore, as a result of his literature review, Mercurio[7]concluded that, there is a need to investigate other factors that may have an impact on organizational commitment in the context of today's modern lifestyle, and used the following expressions in this direction:

"...New antecedents need to be identified in the modern environment in which organizations operate. Research that studies the effects of potentially new antecedents of affective commitment such as social identities, new media, social media, and technology is also needed…"(p. 406)

In this context, the aim of this study is to investigate the possible effects of nomophobia on organizational commitment attitudes of employees by using the basic assumptions of attentional control theory[8]which is a psychological approach that examines the attitudes and behaviors of individuals in the anxiety situations.

II. THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Nomophobia as an Anxiety Disorder

Nomophobia means 'no mobile phone phobia' or 'the fear of being out of mobile phone contact'[9]and is defined as the fear of not being able to benefit from the smart phone and its services [10]. Clinical features of nomophobiaappear as being constantly busy with the mobile phone, constantly looking at the screen to check for incoming messages or calls, feeling intense anxiety and tension when the mobile phone cannot be used for various reasons and keeping the mobile phone always on [11].Affecting the mental status of the smartphone users [12], nomophobia, in the context of phobic situations (irrational fear and anxiety), has been suggested to be included in Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) which is the gold standard manual to assess the psychiatric diseases [11].

Rooted in cognitive psychology, attentional control theory which investigates attentional control of individuals with anxiety can provide us with a useful framework to understand the thoughts and emotions underlying the behaviors of nomophobic people. According to this theory,the impairment of attentional control leads to disruption in the balance of two attentional systems, coined by Corbetta and Shulmen[13] as a goal-directed (top-down) attentional system and a stimulus-driven (bottom-up) attentional system. The increase in level of anxiety reduces attentional control and make it difficult for the goal-directed attentional system to override the stimulus-driven attentional system, especially in the presence of threat-related distracting-stimuli. Accordingly, we suppose that nomophobiamay affect the employees' attitudes and behaviors negatively within the organization via disrupting their cognitive and perceptual processes in accordance with the assumptions of attentional control theory.

Nomophobia and Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment refers to loyalty to an organization [14,15]. Kanter [16] defined

organizational commitment as accepting values, sympathizing with and supporting them, and maintaining relationships with the organization. Porter, Steers, Mowday and Boulian[17] conceptualized organizational commitment as 'believing and adopting the goals and values of the organization, trying to make greater contributions beyond formal job requirements and desiring to become a member of the organization'. Moghaddam and Ensari[18], on the other hand, considered organizational commitment as the harmony between the objectives of the organizations and members, and argued that employees attached to their organizations would increase their efforts towards organizational goals. While Pool and Pool [19] stated that organizational commitment reflects an employee's commitment to the goals of the organization, Aydın, Sarıer and Uysal[20], encompassing all these definitions, defined organizational commitment as maintaining organizational membership, identification with and working for the objectives of the organization and displaying loyalty to the organization.

According to Meyer and Allen [21], organizational commitment has three components: 'affective commitment', 'continuance commitment' and 'normative commitment'. According to the authors, affective component of organizational commitment refers to employee's emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in the organization. The continuance component refers to commitment based on the costs that employees associate with leaving the organization. The normative component refers to employee's feelings of obligation to remain with the organization.

According to the attentional control theory[8], nomophobia-based anxiety and fear can impair these cognitive and perceptual processes and prevent nomophobic employees from making accurate assessments, and ultimately cause worrying thoughts and aversive emotional state. Since employees with anxiety are more likely to focus only on the fears and worrieswhich they are experiencing, and since their ability to filter out unnecessary and irrelevant information may be interrupted, they may remain indifferent to the organization's goals and values[22]. As the goal-directed attentional system of nomophobic employees will probably be disabled to a great extent, especially when they are unable to use the facilities of mobile phones, they are expected to exhibit attitudes and behaviors to avoid the anxiety and fear that they feel as a result of the stimulus-driven attentional system [13]. In this case, since the organization itself can be perceived as a threat as well, an attitude towards alienation from the organization will become possible.

Because of the problems they may have in their relationships and interactions with other employees, they may be deprived of the social support they need, and so they may tend to isolate themselves socially and try to avoid the emotional and cognitive aspects of their work / organizations [e.g.23,24,25,26,10,27].

In addition to anxiety and fear caused by nomophobia, a range of stimulus-driven behaviors and habits emphasized by attentional control theory can harm employee well-being and happiness within the organization [28]. In particular, it is suggested that the feelings of increased workload on the person as a result of excessive mobile phone use due to nomophobia, frequent work interruptions resulting from the need for constant response, and focusing problems may lead to psychological exhaustion, and increasing deterioration of psychological well-being and unhappiness of employees [e.g.29,22,30,26,31]. It may not be possible to expect an employee who does not feel comfortable and happy in the organization to establish any emotional, normative and continuance typeof commitment with his/her organization.

In sum,the research model (Figure 1) and the hypotheses of the study are presented below:

Hypothesis 1: Nomophobia negatively affects affective commitment.

Hypothesis 2: Nomophobia negatively affects normative commitment.

Hypothesis 3: Nomophobia negatively affects continuance commitment.

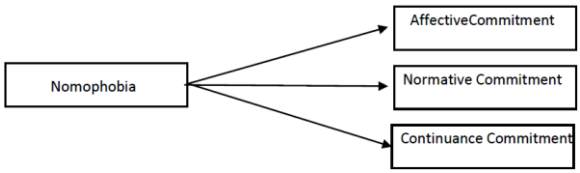


Figure 1: Research Model

III. DISCUSSIONS

It is thought that the distortion caused by nomophobia-based anxiety and fear in employees' cognitive (attention and perception) processes might also have important effects on other attitudes and behaviors of employees, as well as on organizational commitment. Therefore, this studyis considered to be useful in increasing awareness of researchers in the field of organizational behavior on nomophobia, a psychological disorder of the modern age.

Additionally, Mercurio[7]has called for the need to explore new antecedents that could affect the organizational commitment of employees in the context of modern living conditions. This studyis in line with the author's arguments. Moreover, weargue that apart from nomophobia, other factors posed by modern living conditions may also have impact on organizational commitment.

Besides, this study is thought to open a door for investigating and uncovering other psychological and social phenomena that may be considered as a source of anxiety and fear other than nomophobia. We

suggest that today's modern lifestyle can have many other different sources of stress, anxiety and fears imposed on people, and therefore all these factors can have an inevitable impact on employees' organizational attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, we hope that future studies in the field of organizational behavior will take these issues into consideration.

Finally, in relation to our arguments just stated above, we think that this study brings 'attentional control theory'[32] to the field of organizational behavior. Given the importance of the effects of cognitive processes on individuals' attitudes, behaviors and decision processes and the importance of anxiety and fear on human behavior, this theory, will be analternative but important perspectivefor the researchers working in this field.

Practical Implications

There are two main characteristics that make nomophobia important for organizational behaviors: its acceptance as a very widespread psychological disorder throughout the world [33,34,11], and the substantial effects of anxiety on human behavior [8,11,35]. When the importance and prevalence of nomophobia and the expected impact of nomophobia on organizational commitment are taken into consideration, it is concluded that serious measures might be needed by organizational managers. Otherwise, if organizational commitment is adversely affected, it should be kept in mind that organizational success possibly will be negatively affected as well. Therefore, we believe organizations should provide the psychological and social support needed by nomophobic employees, including the medical services necessary for advanced cases. Organizations should also review their organizational policies, practices and discourses for stimuli that may trigger anxiety and fears of such employees.

Future Research Directions

We think that this study deals with an important modern phenomenon and has a substantial potential to contribute to the field of organizational behavior. In this context, we recommend future researchers to empirically test our research model developed based on attentional control theory.Furthermore, in order to provide a more precise picture of the relationship between nomophobia and organizational commitment, it is necessary to consider other important factors at the individual (e.g. demographic and psychological traits) and organizational level (e.g. culture, climate, justice, leadership) that may influence this relationship, as moderators or mediators.

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