

Relationship between Phubbing and Impulsivity among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

In the present world, addiction to mobile phones has increased and is slowly eating into the communication and interaction between individuals. A major cause of this is the phenomenon of Phubbing where individuals ignore each other in favor of using their phones. Studies have also shown that as the Phubbing behavior increases, the tendency of making impulsive choices also increases. The purpose of the present study is to determine the relationship between Phubbing and Impulsivity. The objectives of this study are 1) to identify the relationship between Phubbing and Impulsivity and 2) To check if there is a difference in Phubbing and Impulsivity among gender, family types and ages. The sample consisted of 78 males and 172 females between 18 and 25 years of age. The following instruments were used to measure the variables - Phubbing was measured using the 15-item Generic Scale of Phubbing given by Varoth Chotpitayasunodh and Karen Douglas, Impulsivity was measured using Barratt Impulsiveness Scale - 11. Data was collected using a purposive sampling method. The results uncovered that there is a positive correlation between Phubbing and Impulsivity. The present study can help understand the upshot of Phubbing and highlight the negative consequences of mobile phone addiction.

Keywords: *Young Adults, Phubbing, Impulsivity, Cyber Psychology*

The original thought that went into the creators' minds while making phones was to make our lives easier. We no longer have to buy physical copies of newspapers to know what is happening around the world or wait 2-3 days or months together to send or receive a response from our near ones who live in different countries. Undoubtedly, phones have made our lives much easier than before. All these advantages, however, have created a whole new range of disadvantages. It created a dependence on mobile phones, so much so that we even have a phobia - nomophobia - for fear of staying away from our phones, there's a fear of missing out and recently Phubbing.

Concept of Phubbing

Phubbing is a portmanteau of the words "phone" and "snubbing" (Karadağ et al. 2015). This term was originally coined in a campaign by the Macquarie lexicon to represent a growing

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downside of smart phone misuse in social things. In simple terms, it means ignoring a person in favor of using your mobile phone. In every social interaction, a “phubber” is often outlined as an individual who ignores the person beside him and uses the mobile phone and starts phubbing his or her companion(s), and a “phubbee” are often outlined as an individual who could be a recipient of phubbing behavior. Phubbing is considered as disrespectful behavior towards others and this has been proved in a study that phubbing damages real-life social relationships with others (Karadağ et al., 2015).

In a recent study conducted in Ankara, Turkey around 86.2% of students thought that the person they are talking to doesn't listen to them because of Phubbing and 83.3% of people get annoyed (Nazir, 2017). However, it is also true that we have gotten so used to this phenomenon, that it's now just accepted as an annoying part of our lives. However, research done on Phubbing shows that it's turning into a much bigger problem. They have proven that Phubbing has a negative effect on interpersonal relationships and also creates Fear of Missing out and Anxiety. College students have been found to be the biggest population who are prone to the practice of Phubbing.

Therefore, the personality and psychological risk factors that may lead to phubbing need to be further examined.

Concept of Impulsivity

Impulsivity is defined as engaging in behaviors without forethought and prematurely responding to stimuli that often produce adverse consequences (Moeller et al., 2007). Being impulsive was so far considered as just another personality trait. Studies then showed that it was the main cause for addiction to drugs, alcohol, etc. Walther et al.'s study in 2012 found that high impulsivity was the only personality characteristic that was associated with all of the addictive behaviors that were investigated. Studies have also found that impulsive behavior was a high predictor of mobile dependency with some studies pointing towards evidence that Impulsivity influenced addiction to smartphones indirectly and directly. So when mobile phone addictions shot up, Researchers began studying mobile phone addictions and their relation with Impulsivity. These studies showed that Impulsivity played an important role in that it turned from a personality trait into one of the highest predictors of mobile phone addiction. Individuals who engaged in their impulsive natures were found to be the ones most likely to make risky choices. Studies have also found that adolescents aged between 12 to 19 have increased Impulsivity and mobile phone dependence that they use as an outlet for their frustration.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Impulsivity

A study finds that materialism and impulsiveness drive both a dependence on cell phones and instant messaging. The researchers agree with Griffith's (2012) warning that addiction might be multiple things such as a particular activity or function of the cell phone. (Roberts and Pirog, 2013). Walther and his team's study in 2012 falls in line with this study as it found that high impulsivity was the only personality characteristic that was associated with all of the addictive behaviors.

A Cluster Analysis by Hayashi and Washio in 2020 examined whether text-message users would differ in levels of executive function, a trait of impulsivity, and impulsive decision making. Its results showed that mobile dependent users were lower on levels of executive function and higher on levels of the trait of impulsivity. This study demonstrated that

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excessive text-message users are not necessarily dependent text-message users and executive function and impulsivity may play an important role in differentiating between extensive text messengers and dependent text messengers. (Hayashi and Washio, 2020). A study conducted by Burnell, K., and Kuther, T. L. in 2016 on Predictors of Mobile Phone and Social Networking Site Dependency in Adulthood showed that individuals with a strong orientation toward social comparison, who perceive a strong sense of support through SNS networks, or who show difficulty with self-regulation may be at risk for SNS and mobile phone dependency. (Burnell and Kuther, 2016)

Billieux et al. examined the association of mobile dependence and impulsiveness of 108 female undergraduate students in psychology through the questionnaire, Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI-T), and found that impulsiveness significantly correlated with perceived mobile dependence. This led them to support the notion that adolescents who are more impulsive are at a greater risk for being dependent on mobile phones to find their own escape and outlet of frustration. A study to examine the frequency of mobile phone dependence in Chinese university students and explored its association with social support and impulsivity found that the frequency of mobile phone dependence was high and a significant positive association with impulsivity was found. (Mei et al., 2018). Jeske and his teammates' study suggested that impulsive people are more frequent users of public devices and networks in their daily interactions and are more likely to access their social networks on a regular basis. These individuals were also likely to make risky decisions. (Jeske et al., 2016).

Another study found that smart phone addiction increased with impulsivity, depression, and intention to use smart phones and parent-adolescent communication acted as mediator between smart phone addiction, impulsivity and depression. This study suggested that education aimed at improving communication between parents and adolescents might help reduce depression and impulsivity and thus reduce mobile phone addiction. (J. Y. Kim, 2018).

Phubbing

Literary research by Nazir and Bulut on the determinants of phubbing showed that Smartphone addiction or Internet Addiction, Social Media Addiction, Gaming Addiction, and Personal and Situational factors are major determinants of phubbing. (Nazir and Bulut, 2019). Another study found that trait boredom predicted phubbing frequency. This study highlighted the need for future research to examine phubbing as a moderator of the relationship between boredom and negative effects. (Al-Saggaf et al., 2018). A study aimed at finding the determinants of Phubbing found that the correlation was highest with mobile phone addiction and a dependency on the phone. This study concludes that there is an increasing tendency towards mobile phone use which becomes the basis for phubbing. (Karadağ et al., 2015). Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas in 2016 conducted a study to predict the extent to which people phub which showed that Internet addiction, fear of missing out, and self-control predicted smartphone addiction, and this predicted the extent to which people phub. This study also showed the extent to which people have grown accepting of phubbing. (Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas, 2016) Another study aimed at relating Face book to phubbing revealed that Face book intrusion could be a cause of phubbing. In this study, women scored higher than men on the phubbing dimensions. Face book intrusion also predicted loneliness. This proved the multidimensional nature of phubbing (Błachnio and Przepiórka, 2018). Isrofin and Munawaroh's study findings show that smartphone addiction is a predictor of phubbing behavior by 47 percent (Isrofin and Munawaroh, 2021).

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Varoth Chotpitayasunodh and Karen Douglas attempted to experimentally investigate the social consequences of phubbing. This research demonstrated that phubbing violates fundamental human needs and reduces the effect. In turn, a sense of belonging and both positive and negative affects lead to negative communication outcomes.

Need and significance of the study

Studies done on phone dependence have shown that as dependence on the phone increases the urge to take impulsive decisions will also increase. At the same time statistics show an increase in the number of mobile phone users and the level of Phubbing is at an all-time high. However, there haven't been any studies done linking Phubbing and Impulsivity or looking at the relationship between them.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the study

1. To determine if there is a relationship between Phubbing and Impulsivity
2. To study the relationship between Phubbing and Impulsivity with family types.
3. To study the relationship between Phubbing and Impulsivity with gender.
4. To study the relationship between Phubbing and Impulsivity with age.

Hypothesis

- H1: There will be a relationship between Phubbing and Impulsivity
- H2: There is a difference in the levels of Phubbing and Impulsivity with family types
- H3: There is a difference in the levels of Phubbing and Impulsivity with gender
- H4: There is a difference in the levels of Phubbing and Impulsivity with age.

Sample

The sample consisted of young adults, from the age group of 18 – 25 from the cities of Hyderabad and Bangalore. The numbers of participants were 78 males and 172 females.

Instruments

Two measures were used in this study,

- **The Generic Scale of Phubbing (GSP):** Generic phubbing scale created by Varoth Chotpitayasunodh and Karen Douglas in 2018. This scale measures phone snubbing behavior in social interactions. It has dimensions of nomophobia, Interpersonal conflict, Self-isolation and Problem acknowledgement. Participants respond to items on a seven-point scale, with a label associated with each point. (1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Occasionally, 4 = Sometimes, 5 = Frequently, 6 = Usually, 7 = Always). Reliability (α) range is between .82 - .93.
- **Barratt Impulsiveness Scale:** The Barratt Impulsiveness Scale was given by Patton et al., in 1995. It is a questionnaire designed to assess the personality/behavioral construct of impulsiveness. It is the most widely cited instrument for the assessment of impulsiveness and has been used to advance our understanding of this construct and its relationship to other clinical phenomena for 50 years (Stanford et al., 2009).

Procedure

Purposive sampling technique was used to collect data from 252 participants. After selecting the measures, a few arrangements were made for data collection. The questionnaires were prepared and organized. Data was collected through online Google forms. Informed consent

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was taken from the respondents and the questionnaire was administered. On an average the time taken to administer the scale was 15 minutes.

RESULTS

Table No. 1 Correlations between Phubbing and Impulsivity

Phubbing	Impulsivity
	0.205**

Table 1 shows that there is significant weak correlation ($p=0.205$) between Phubbing and Impulsivity.

Table No. 2 Mean, standard deviation and t-test ratios of the dimensions of Impulsivity and Phubbing amongst family types.

	Nuclear family (n=200)		Joint family (n = 50)		t	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD		
Dimensions of Baret Impulsivity Scale						
Attention	10.7	2.7	10.9	2.6	0.42	0.67
Cognitive Instability	7.1	2.1	7.01	2.2	0.52	0.6
Motor	15.4	3.6	15.3	3.1	0.19	0.84
Preserverance	7.4	2.1	7.1	1.9	1.07	0.28
Self Control	10.7	3.6	13.6	3.6	1.31	0.19
Cognitive Component	7.1	2.1	12.3	2.1	0.82	0.4
Dimensions of Generic Scale of Phubbing						
Nomophobia	15.2	5.3	13.3	5.08	2.28	0.02*
Interpersonal Conflict	8.6	4.5	8.09	4.7	0.79	0.42
Self Isolation	8.9	4.8	8.6	4.8	0.35	0.72
Problem Acknowledgement	10.2	4.4	9.4	4.1	1.19	1.53

Table 2 shows a significant difference in nomophobia ($p=0.02$) between nuclear families and joint families with nuclear families displaying slightly higher levels of nomophobia. There is, however, no research done on the same.

Table No. 3 Mean, standard deviation and t-test ratios of the dimensions of Impulsivity and Phubbing based on gender

	Females (n = 172)		Males (n = 78)		t	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD		
Dimensions of Baret Impulsivity Scale						
Attention	10.6	2.8	10.9	2.5	0.49	0.42
Cognitive Instability	7.1	2.1	7.2	2.2	0.53	0.59
Motor	15.01	3.4	16.3	3.5	0.27	0.007**
Preserverance	7.2	2.08	7.7	2.07	1.7	0.09
Self Control	12.5	3.4	13.9	3.9	2.74	0.007**
Cognitive Component	12.1	2.2	12.1	2.1	0.09	0.92
Dimensions of Generic Scale of Phubbing						
Nomophobia	14.7	5.3	15.2	5.4	0.61	0.54
Interpersonal Conflict	8.3	4.5	9	4.6	1.02	0.3
Self Isolation	8.5	4.2	9.5	5.8	1.5	0.12
Problem Acknowledgement	9.9	4.4	10.2	4.3	0.4	0.68

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Table 3 shows a significant difference was seen only in the subscales of Impulsivity -motor and self-control. Within these females are shown to have more motor and self-control as compared to males. This is in line with an evolutionary framework study by Bjorklund and Kipp (1996) that predicts that there is a female advantage in inhibition and self-regulation due to differing selection pressures placed on males and females.

Table No. 4 Mean, standard deviation and F of the dimensions of Impulsivity and Phubbing based on age

	19 to 21 years (n = 83)		22 years (n = 84)		23 to 25 years (n=85)		F
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Dimensions of Barrett Impulsivity Scale							
Attention	11.2	2.9	10.6	2.5	10.4	2.5	1.7
Cognitive Instability	7.7	2.09	6.6	1.8	7.05	2.39	5.62
Motor	15.1	3.4	15.3	3.2	15.7	3.8	0.64
Perseverance	7.3	2.2	7.2	2.07	7.6	1.9	0.68
Self Control	12.8	3.6	13.1	3.6	13.05	3.6	0.11
Cognitive Component	12.03	2.2	12.2	1.9	12.1	2.2	0.23
Dimensions of Generic Scale of Phubbing							
Nomophobia	15.4	5.5	14.08	5.7	14.9	4.7	1.35
Interpersonal Conflict	8.6	4.8	8.8	4.5	8.1	4.2	0.53
Self Isolation	9.2	5.6	9.1	4.2	8.2	4.5	1.23
Problem-Acknowledgement	10.9	4.8	9.6	4.1	9.5	4.06	2.67

Table 4 does not show significant difference between Attention, Cognitive instability, Perseverance, Self-Control, Cognitive complexity, Nomophobia, Interpersonal Conflict, Self-Isolation, and Problem acknowledgement based on age. A study by M. Dreyfuss et.al (2014) concluded that "Impulsivity was found to steadily decline from age 10 through adolescence and well into early adulthood. Adolescents younger than 16, demonstrated significantly less impulse control than 16 to 17-year-olds, and 16 to 17-year-olds demonstrated significantly less impulse control than 22- to 25-year-olds."

CONCLUSION

Since the major purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between Phubbing and Impulsivity among young adults and identify if there is a significant difference in Phubbing and Impulsivity based on socio demographic details such as age, gender, and family type depending on the findings these following conclusions were made:

- The results uncovered that there is a positive correlation between Phubbing and Impulsivity.
- There is a significant difference in nomophobia between nuclear and joint families with displaying slightly higher levels of nomophobia.
- There is a significant difference in motor and self-control among males and females with females displaying higher motor and self-control.
- There is no significant difference in Phubbing and Impulsivity based on age.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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