Unveiling the Link between Phubbing and Online Aggression Attributable to Alexithymia: Insights and Solutions

Ms. Deepa Shree B[1]*, Ms. Renisha Jerine R[2]

ABSTRACT

The so-called Generation Z has changed as a result of advances in technology and outside knowledge. Additionally, it opened the door for behaviors associated with mental illness, such as cyber aggression, alexithymia, and phubbing behavior. Here, the worth and significance of privacy are seriously questioned. The purpose of the study is to determine how Phubbing behavior and cyber aggression that results in alexithymia are related. The sample comprises adults who are above the age of 18, which includes males and females. To examine the Phubbing behaviour, Phubbing Scale (PS-8) was used. It consists of 8 items. For the examination of Cyber aggression, Cyber aggression scale (CYBA was used. It consists of 19 items and finally for Alexithymia, The Perth Alexithymia Questionnaire (PAQ) was taken. It has 24 items. ANOVA and Convenience sampling techniques were employed to gather data for the research. For the Study, 80 samples were utilized. The scale maintains exact validity and reliability. The study's conclusions may indicate that cyber aggression and phubbing are positively correlated with alexithymia; hence, psychological therapies like skill development programs, online awareness courses, and promoting positive attribution training may eventually aid in enhancing an individual's productivity at work.

Keywords: Phubbing, Online aggression and Alexithymia

Smartphones, tablets, laptops, desktop computers, and gaming consoles provide young people with unrestricted access to information. Today, social media is more popular and diverse than ever before. Social media is a vital component of this ecosystem. Social media, in its broadest meaning, is any digital program or software that enables users to interact socially. The usage of social media by young people is neither good nor detriment. The online lives of young people impact and are influenced by their real lives. Overall, the influence of social media is determined by the personal and emotional traits of young people, as well as the social context linked with specific material, features, or works made available through various social networking sites. As a result, social media will have a limited impact. Media consumption and health may be linked, and behavioural changes could help explain why. Behaviour modification is a psychology theory that says that people lack self-control and, when confronted with a challenging or stressful situation, may engage in behaviour that delivers immediate reward but contradicts long-term goals (Capilla

[1]Undergraduate, Department of Psychology, Thiagarajar College, Madurai, India
[2]Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Thiagarajar College, Madurai, India
*Corresponding Author

Garrido et al., 2021). Additionally, when people cannot cope with stress in a healthy way, they will engage in behaviors that will temporarily make them feel better but will ultimately harm their long-term goals and health. The impact of social media has turned out to result in various mental health problems that are new to be heard about. It has been suggested that excessive smartphone use in the company of others can have detrimental consequences for users. Essentially, the habit of ignoring others in favor of cellphones has given rise to a new notion known as "Phubbing". Phubbing, as defined by Wolf (2014, p. 2), is "intimidating someone in a relationship by looking at them instead of their phone." This behavior can be detrimental to interpersonal interactions, relationships, and personal wellness. According to current data, the number of studies on phubbing is fairly limited because it is a new phenomenon, and little is known about the reasons of phubbing behavior and the type of conduct it results in (Capilla Garrido et al., 2021). Today's acceptance or communication rules. Ignoring behavior which is "Phubbing" (phone + belittling) refers to the behavior of ignoring one or more people in a relationship, focusing on the smartphone, and avoiding face-to-face communication. The consequence of social media has culminated in an array of previously unknown psychological disorders. The Internet has altered our ability to communicate, study, and work. It offers up a world of possibilities, allowing us to live with loved ones in any place, access knowledge at the touch of a button, and work with individuals all over the world. However, we cannot disregard the negative aspects of the internet world. The spread of cyberattacks is a major source of concern. Because of the anonymity and impartiality of the online environment, people may behave poorly in real life, resulting in less effect and opportunity for action. Depersonalizing one's actions in huge online forums might lessen emotion and promote aggression. Online violence may be used to socialize, increasing the possibility that others would engage in similar conduct, creating a vicious cycle. Depression, anxiety, and wrath may all contribute to cyber aggressive conduct as people try to make themselves appear awful to others. Payment technologies, such as the ease with which content may be shared on online platforms and the lack of face-to-face connection, can facilitate the spread of violent conduct and make it more difficult for people to accept responsibility for their acts. Phubbing and cyber assaults have a varied and intricate link; it has the capacity to both cause and enhance relationships. Subsections can be linked together. Ignoring someone in favor of your phone may lead to feelings of annoyance, anger, and resentment, especially if it occurs on a regular basis. These unpleasant feelings can then be expressed in the online realm, where people engage in hostile conduct such as flaming, trolling, or cyberbullying. Because of the anonymity and distance of online contacts, phubbing-induced dissatisfaction might be exacerbated. Individuals who have been phubbed are more prone to engage in online aggression without experiencing immediate penalties because they feel less responsible and disinhibited. Individuals who feel neglected or insulted in real life may use online aggression to reclaim a sense of authority and control. They may lash out online in order to be heard or to demonstrate their control in a virtual environment. The way an individual with alexithymia reacts to and displays their emotions online varies tremendously based on personality, coping abilities, and motivation. While the association between alexithymia and violent online conduct is intriguing, other factors such as past behavior, mental health, and online experience may also have an impact. Proactively want to better regulate their conduct and monitor their online interactions should be aware of the potential connection among alexithymia and online aggression. Mindfulness, emotional awareness, and the development of real-life connections can all assist to mitigate the risks connected with cyberattacks. Understanding cyber assaults necessitates digging into a sophisticated theoretical framework designed to describe the complicated phenomena. According to decision-making and planned behavior theories, beliefs, attitudes, and

information control all impact aggression and behavior. These settings can be altered by online anonymity and constraints, leading to increasing violence(Hogeveen & Grafman, 2021). Based on the social dominance orientation theory, those with a social dominance orientation want to control and dominate others. This urge can be satisfied through violence in the internet realm. Theories have connected recklessness, enmity, and vanity to an increased risk of unveiling a cyber-attack. The Violence Cultivation Theory, extended exposure to violence and criminality in the media, especially internet information, might cause people to lose interest in violence and become more ready to take action against it. The Internet Balkanization Theory underscores the propensity of online groups to split and polarize, where conflicting perspectives may produce noise and foster violent conduct. Technological affordance theory focuses on how the design and features of online platforms can influence user behavior, with some features (e.g., anonymity, lack of moderation) potentially facilitating online aggression(*Balkanization of the Internet | Business Executives for National Security*, 2022). Algorithm bias theory examines how algorithmic filtering and content recommendation systems can create echo chambers and exacerbate online aggression by exposing users primarily to perspectives that reinforce their existing biases. Alexithymia, or difficulty detecting and describing emotions, is a fascinating and complex phenomenon. Numerous ideas have been proposed to explain its origins and manifestations, each with a distinct point of viewpoints. According to early attachment and object relationship theories, insecure attachment patterns or emotionally aloof caregivers in childhood might impede emotional development and contribute to Alexithymia. Defense Mechanisms proposes that people with Alexithymia use defense mechanisms like denial or intellectualization automatically to avoid experiencing unpleasant emotions. Internalized stereotypes of caregivers as rejecting or emotionally unavailable may lead to aversion to feelings linked with vulnerability and reliance. In accordance with neurobiological theories, Emotional Intelligence Deficit hypotheses argue that persons with Alexithymia have a basic problem attention to, discriminating, and identifying internal emotional experiences. According to theories of Deficient Symbolic Representation, Alexithymia is caused by difficulties in converting raw emotional experiences into symbolic representations such as words or images(Capilla Garrido et al., 2021). Limbic-Cortical Dysregulation describes brain networks that link limbic (emotional processing) and cortical (cognitive processing) areas, resulting in issues with emotional perception and expression. Additionally, few cognitive theories imply constant correspondence and stimulants from our phones can captivate our attention and make it difficult to fully participate in face-to-face encounters, resulting in unintended phubbing(Wotschack & Klann-Delius, 2013).

The fear of missing out on anything occurring online might cause people to check their phones constantly, even in the company of others, which can lead to phubbing behavior. To combat phubbing, the act of neglecting someone in favor of your phone, a multi-pronged approach concentrating on individual awareness, societal standards, and technology assistance is required. Here are a few possible solutions such as Setting limits and explicit expectations, turning off notifications and using airplane mode, and designating phone-free zones are all ways to practice mindfulness and self-monitoring(Wotschack & Klann-Delius, 2013). To circumvent online hostility, Platforms may improve their algorithms and human review procedures to quickly detect and delete hazardous material. Giving victims of online violence clear reporting channels, instructional resources on online safety and courteous conversation, and assistance. Positive online community promotion. Encourage positive conversation and collaboration while discouraging echo chambers that foster hostility. Putting in place clear standards and enforcing penalties for online aggressiveness,

harassment, and bullying. By accepting these notions and working together, we can build a safer and more inclusive online environment in which everyone feels respected and cherished. Online interactions are still real interactions, and our digital world should be guided by an ethic of respect and kindness.

Purpose of the Study
The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between phubbing behaviour and online aggression that tends towards alexithymia.

METHODOLOGY
Samples
Participants were adults above the age of 18. Eighty individuals agreed to participate in this study. From the collected data of 80, there were 40 male participants and 40 female participants, with responses from both genders equally distributed.

Materials
To examine the Phubbing behaviour, Phubbing Scale (PS-8) was used. It consists of 8 items. For the examination of Cyber aggression, Cyber aggression scale (CYBA was used. It consists of 19 items and finally for Alexithymia, The Perth Alexithymia Questionnaire (PAQ) was used. It has 24 items.

Procedure
Participants are given questionnaires for the Phubbing Scale (PS-8), Cyber Aggression Scale, and The Perth Alexithymia Questionnaire measures, as well as a consent form and personal information. Initially, the participants read the consent form. Participants that agreed to participate in the study continued to complete questions, followed by a consent form. Participants submitted their comments after answering all 52 questions, which were spread over three devoid questionnaires. There were 80 data points collected, categorized as 40 females and 40 males. The Phubbing scale with the 5-point Likert scale consisting of Not at all true of me, True of me, Neutral, Somewhat true of me, and Extremely true of me and the Online Aggression scale with the 4-point Likert scale with the options of Totally false, Somewhat false, Somewhat true, and Totally true, along with the Alexithymia Questionnaire, which is a 7-point Likert scale consisting of the options such as Strongly disagree, Disagree, Somewhat disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat agree, Agree, and Strongly agree, were given to the participants.

RESULT
The analysis in the study was to determine the relationship between Phubbing, online aggression and Alexithymia among adults. The results from the research as follows:

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of Phubbing, Online aggression and Alexithymia.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Phubbing	80	20.27	5.46
Online Aggression	80	23.57	7.28
Alexithymia	80	92.53	27.83

Based on the output table, out of 80 samples, the mean of Phubbing is 20.27 and the standard deviation is 5.46; the mean of online aggression is 23.57 and the standard deviation is 7.28; and the mean value of Alexithymia is 92.53 and the standard deviation is 27.

Table 2: Regression Analysis

	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
Alexithymia	16.18	3.71	.00	4.36	.000
	.00	.03	.01	.12	.908
Phubbing	16.46	2.10	.00	7.84	.000
	0.4	.02	.21	1.99	.061
Online	21.93	2.86	.00	7.68	.000
Aggression	.06	.03	.07	.60	.548

Table 2, shows that the standardized error for alexithymia is 3.71, with a t value of 4.36. The standardized error for phubbing is 2.10, with a t-value of 7.84, while for online aggressiveness, it is 2.86, with a t-value of 7.68, Hence all predictors are statistically significant.

Interpretation
The regression analysis reveals significant associations between the predictors "Alexithymia," "Phubbing," and "Online Aggression" and the dependent variable. A one-unit increase in "Alexithymia" corresponds to a 3.71-unit rise, and the t-value is 4.36, emphasizing its substantial impact. "Phubbing" contributes positively with a coefficient of 2.10 and a t-value of 7.84, while "online aggression" exhibits the highest influence with a coefficient of 2.86 and a t-value of 7.68. Standardized coefficients (Beta values) highlight their relative importance, with "online aggression" having the strongest standardized effect (Beta = 0.21). All predictors are statistically significant. These results indicate that Alexithymia and Online Aggression have stronger associations with the outcome variable compared to Phubbing, as indicated by their higher standardized coefficients (Beta) and larger t-values. However, all three predictors are statistically significant based on their p-values.

DISCUSSION

The regression analysis found statistical significance for the variables phubbing, online aggression, and alexithymia. It has been shown that persons who are overly vindictive as a result of their excessive use and impact of social media exhibit phubbing, which is ignorance or avoidance of engagement with others, which can lead to alexithymia by combating emotions and feelings. It could be due to excessive use of social media and mobile phone addiction, which can lead to online aggression. This may gradually deviate an individual from isolating and neglecting others while avoiding opening up and bottling up emotions and sensations. According to the study, the sample sizes for both variables are appropriate, with 80 cases each. These data indicate a substantial linear association between phubbing, online hostility, and alexithymia in the study population. This suggests that people who use social networking sites frequently may be more likely to develop online hostility and alexithymia. However, regression does not indicate causality, and other factors not examined in this research may have contributed to the observed link. Phubbing disrupts your capacity to be present and interact with those around you. More than three-quarters of Americans now own smartphones, thus the phubbing problem may be worsening. According to one study, texting during a face-to-face interaction reduced the satisfaction level for everyone engaged, including the guilty phubber. Phubbing and smartphone use can also affect

marriages. One study found that phubbing reduces marital satisfaction. Conflicts over phone use were the primary cause behind these concerns. Another study discovered that partners who phub each other have higher chances of depression (Holland, 2018). Dealing with alexithymia can be difficult and stressful, especially if it affects your work or personal connections with friends and family. That's why it's important to develop some coping strategies, especially if you have trouble keeping track of your thoughts. Keeping a journal is a possible alexithymia prevention strategy. There is some evidence that writing can help people see their emotions, especially those with alexithymia due to abuse or trauma. This may seem like a daunting task at first, but its purpose is to make you aware of yourself and others. For people with stable or chronic alexithymia, writing may not be effective. Alexithymia can be difficult and stressful to deal with, especially if it interferes with job or personal connections with friends and family. As a result, it is critical to have some coping strategies, especially if you are working on becoming more in tune with your emotions. Journaling is one possible coping strategy for alexithymia. There is some evidence that expressive writing can help people notice emotions, particularly those with alexithymia caused by abuse or trauma. This may seem like a difficult task at first, but the idea is to increase your awareness of both yourself and others. Journaling may be ineffective for people with fixed or static alexithymia. Alexithymia can be difficult and stressful to deal with, especially if it interferes with job or personal connections with friends and family. As a result, it is critical to have some coping strategies, especially if you are working on becoming more in tune with your emotions. Journaling is one possible coping strategy for alexithymia. There is some evidence that expressive writing can help people notice emotions, particularly those with alexithymia caused by abuse or trauma. This may seem like a difficult task at first, but the idea is to increase your awareness of both yourself and others. Journaling may be ineffective for people with fixed or static alexithymia (Gordon, 2023). There is no specific treatment for alexithymia, however therapy can help with emotional awareness and expression. Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) and psychodynamic therapy have both been demonstrated to be useful in treating alexithymia. CBT focuses on identifying and modifying negative thought patterns and behaviours, whereas psychodynamic therapy investigates the underlying emotional problems that may be causing alexithymia. In rare circumstances, medication may be administered to assist treat sadness or anxiety symptoms related to alexithymia (Zauderer, 2023). Alexithymia is frequently associated with other mental health problems, including depression and anxiety. People with alexithymia may struggle to absorb and express their emotions, leading to feelings of despair, hopelessness, and worry. According to research, those with alexithymia are more likely to develop depression and anxiety problems. According to some research, up to 50% of patients with alexithymia suffer from depression or anxiety. The link between alexithymia and other mental health issues is complex and poorly understood. However, it is hypothesized that the inability to perceive and express emotions may lead to the emergence of these disorders (Zauderer, 2023). The study discusses about the impact of alexithymia may reflect back into an individual's life by which the person finds to difficult to identify and interpret their emotions. And that ultimately affects the social relationships where people build avoidance towars their circumstances.

Limitations
This study has a limited sample size; therefore, presumptions arise. Most of the responses came from adults over the age of 18. Future studies should focus on diverse ethnic groups and additional aspects of loneliness. A large-scale study can be done to gauge overall determined levels.

Suggestions

To form healthy relationships, the study suggests that people cultivate interpersonal ties by spending time with their family, friends, and others. If you are experiencing mental stress or having difficulty distinguishing feelings or emotions, it is recommended that you seek the help of a healthcare expert. The use of mobile phones and other gadgets can be reduced, and focusing on creating and engaging in hobbies can be quite beneficial. This may prevent being infatuated with social media and reducing the likelihood of online hostility. Healthy chats with others can help to enhance knowledge and gain new skills while also promoting social engagement.

CONCLUSION

As an evolved generation with a technologically dependent species, people devote their time and attention to gadget screens. Its purpose is to promote human growth and development. However, excessive usage of social media has been shown to have serious consequences. The study found that frequent use of social networking sites is associated with challenging and undesired behaviors such as phubbing, ignorance, and online aggressiveness, which may lead to alexithymia, which likely leads in people avoiding showing up or revealing their emotions. The solutions that may be offered are to use the media screen cautiously and to engage in positive interpersonal interactions with those around you in order to live a better life and excel in theirs.

REFERENCES

Balkanization of the Internet | Business Executives for National Security. (2022, June 8). https://bens.org/balkanization-of-internet-pt2/

Capilla Garrido, E., Issa, T., Gutiérrez Esteban, P., & Cubo Delgado, S. (2021). A descriptive literature review of phubbing behaviors. *Heliyon*, *7*(5), e07037. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e07037

Digital Ethics: Rhetoric and Responsibility in Online Aggression—1st. (n.d.). Retrieved April 4, 2024, from https://www.routledge.com/Digital-Ethics-Rhetoric-and-Responsibility-in-Online-Aggression/Reyman-Sparby/p/book/9781032177571

Hogeveen, J., & Grafman, J. (2021). Alexithymia. *Handbook of Clinical Neurology*, *183*, 47–62. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-822290-4.00004-9

Runions, K. C., Bak, M., & Shaw, T. (2017). Disentangling functions of online aggression: The Cyber-Aggression Typology Questionnaire (CATQ). *Aggressive Behavior*, *43*(1), 74–84. https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.21663

Wotschack, C., & Klann-Delius, G. (2013). Alexithymia and the conceptualization of emotions: A study of language use and semantic knowledge. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *47*(5), 514–523. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2013.01.011