

Emerging Consequences of Phubbing among Adults

Ramesh Nagarajappa¹, Debasruti Naik², Gayathri Ramesh³

¹Professor and Head, Department of Public Health Dentistry, ²Senior Lecturer, Department of Public Health Dentistry, Institute of Dental Sciences, Siksha 'O' Anusandhan (Deemed to be University), Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India, ³Associate Professor, Department of Dentistry, Chamarajanagar Institute of Medical Sciences, Chamarajanagar, Karnataka, India

Abstract

In recent years phubbing activities have affected both phubbers and phubbees'. It has ruined the real-life social relationships. People who are busy in phubbing believes that smartphones are now a daily part of their interpersonal communication. In simple words, instead of giving much consideration to the people, there is a social place, they opt to bolt their eyes on their mobile phones while interacting with people. Phubbing is a threat to the mental health which leads to depression, anxiety and causes a negative impact on relationships. This review article focuses on the effects and signs of phubbing and how to overcome it.

Keywords: *Counselling, Mental health, Phubbing.*

Introduction

Phubbing is a mixture of the words “phone” as well as “snubbing” that describes the action of snubbing a person in a social place by focusing all the attention on one’s phone instead of talking to the person openly in one’s company. This phubbing terminology was originally coined in a movement by the Macquarie Dictionary to stand for an upcoming problem of smartphone exploitation in a social place.¹ In a public interface, a “phubber” can be considered as a person who keeps on phubbing his or her companion(s), whereas a “phubbee” is an individual who is a receiver of phubbing activity.¹

Phubbing manners has hampered both phubbers and phubbees’ lives deeply in these years.² It can destroy the existent-life community relationships of both phubbers

and phubbees because it is measured as a disrespectful as well as ill-mannered behavior.³ Several studies⁴⁻⁶ have reported that when a person is being phubbed, they tend to have very little contentment as they make out the interaction to be deprived of quality, and they also experience less connectedness with their associate. Phubbing behavior may even jeopardize human lives and this shows that there was a case that has taken place at Malaysia where a six-year-old girl unintentionally fell throughout an opening of an escalator and at the same time during that incident, the girl’s mother was busy in the phone having an argument with her husband on phone, and for that reason neglected her child. This case depicts how being inattentive while on the smartphone devices can cost lives.⁷

What is phubbing?: Phubbing is a word which was termed in May 2012. An advertising agency at Australia had created this word to describe the budding phenomenon of people who ignore their friends and family who were right in front of them but they kept scrolling over their phones.⁸

While the word might not be in our daily vocabulary, the action likely is. Seventeen percent or more people phubb others at least four times or more a day and out of them only 32 percent of people report being phubbed two to three times a day.² While the behavior might

Corresponding Author:

Debasruti Naik

Senior Lecturer, Department of Public Health Dentistry, Institute of Dental Sciences, Siksha 'O' Anusandhan (Deemed to be University), Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

e-mail: smilewithdebshruti@gmail.com

not seem like a big deal, research shows that phubbing can affect your emotional relationships as well as your mental health.⁹

Who does ‘Phubbing’?: The word phubbing might be a new term presently but this act of phubbing is around us since the use of smartphones started among the people. They slowly get addicted to this kind of impulse phubbing behavior. Studies reported that phubbing is mostly related with online self-presentation, online impression management and self-fascination.¹⁰

People who are busy in phubbing believes that smartphones are now a daily part of their interpersonal communication. “So many articles talk about Phubbing in a negative light and it has to be seen as a cultural shift - a generational shift. It could also mean self-love or self-care. Online self-presentation could also mean connecting with more people on a mass level. It’s not necessarily a negative.”¹¹

There are several reasons behind this phubbing action like internet addiction, social media addiction, game addiction, depression, and ‘nomophobia’. “Nomophobia” is a term that means the apprehension of being devoid of a smartphone which is also called a smartphone addiction and it is often lightened up by an internet gorge problem or internet addiction disorder. Smartphones are now loaded with various application which go beyond those of early computers. These smartphone applications have a massive effect on addiction. Excess use of these computers has forced the researchers to comprehend and investigate the concept of computer or smartphone addiction or in a short

technology addiction.^{12,13} Many studies reported that most of those software’s had a huge impact on addiction. Some of the examples of such software applications is that it keeps an individual stay online for longer duration such as playing games online, shopping and social apps.^{4,14}

How phubbing makes us feel?: According to some studies it was found out that people who were phubbed by the concerned person felt very less satisfied with the quality of interaction with the phubber. Results of few studies also reported that such feelings carry only the negative impact of phubbing on their intellect of belongingness, or the human aspiration to be accepted by others.⁹ Now technology and social media are important parts of our smart life, but we shouldn’t forget our mental health and well-being.¹⁵

Gender categorization: Gender categorization has been reported to play an essential role in motivating several smart phone-allied actions such as the preference for online activities,¹⁶ mobile phone dependence,^{17,18} internet obsession,^{18,19} self-indulgence,²⁰ and conversation manners.²¹ Though very little at present is known about how all these phubbing actions, being phubbed, along with supposed social customs of phubbing differ between males and females, some studies reported that women do more phubbing than men along with frequent text messaging and scrolling all over the pages of social media.^{10,22} In the meantime, gender has a moderating consequence on the association that are stuck between social customs and many aspects of human utilization behaviour²³ such as alcohol consumption,²⁴ internet banking¹⁹ and online purchasing.¹⁴

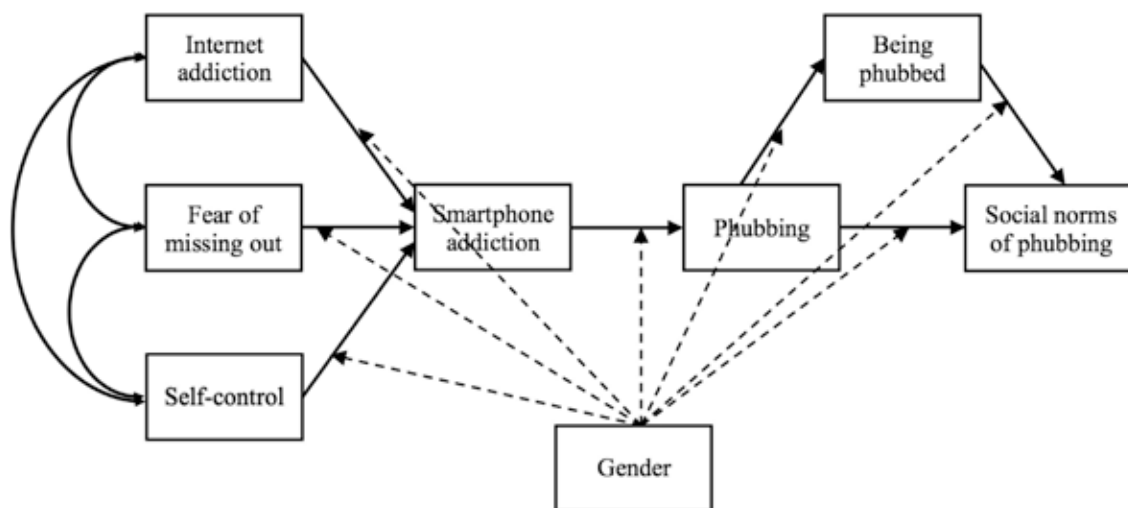


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual phubbing model

Research Model and Hypotheses: A research model to explain the key determinants of phubbing conduct and the apparent social standards of phubbing was developed.² The anticipated model is delineated thoughtfully in Fig. 1. It was theorized that Internet addiction and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) would positively predict smartphone addiction, and that self-control would adversely foresee smartphone addiction. Next, prediction followed that smartphone addiction would positively predict phubbing behavior. Further, it was estimated that phubbing behavior would positively predict the extent to which individuals are phubbed. It was further anticipated that both phubbing and being phubbed would positively predict the degree to which individuals perceive phubbing as normative. Finally, it was predicted that gender would moderate the relationships between every determinant in the proposed model.

How does phubbing affect relationships?: Phubbing stimulates your ability to be present and connect with people around you. Studies reported that texting frequently on phubbing with smartphones during a front-to-front interaction made the experience very less satisfying for each other²⁴ and these actions can also have a bad impact on marriages. Phubbing behavior decreases marital satisfaction.¹⁰ Conflicts over frequent phone use were the driving cause of marital issues. Studies also reported that spouses who phub each other result in higher rates of anxiety and depression.¹³

How does phubbing affect mental health?: From the mental health perspective, according to World Health Organization (WHO) (2014) someone who is declared mentally healthy is having a whole physical, mental and social condition and not just the absence of illness or weakness. So, when we examine it, someone who is doing phubbing, has experienced an indication of mental illness. This is because one aspect of being mentally healthy based on the definition of WHO is that someone who can establish good social relationships, but not for individuals who tend to do phubbing when interacting.^{11,15,23}

What's the driving force behind those feelings?: Phubbing is a threat to four "fundamental needs," the study found.¹² Those core needs are: Belongingness, Self-respect, Meaningful life and Control. If a person phubs you, you might feel rejected, debarred, and nonsignificant that can lead to a negative effect on your mental health. Researchers also reported about a vicious

cycle where the people who are phubbed tend to reach their smart phones more frequently and they try to keep on with their social media network to fill that void.^{3,8}

According to research published in *Computers and Human Behaviour*, social media can make feelings of depression shoddier, and the more you use social media, the more you are to feel depression or anxiety.²¹ The number one sign that you are guilty of phubbing is in your hand - your phone. If your phone is with you at all times because you're afraid you'll miss a call, a tweet, or a status update, you are likely guilty of phubbing.

Signs you may be a phubber¹⁸:

- 1. Carrying on two conversations at once, on your phone and in person:** You're likely doing neither very successfully, and you're most certainly phubbing.
- 2. Immediately bringing your phone out at dinner or other social settings:** Putting your phone beside your plate "just in case" is a warning sign that you'll soon be phubbing. Plus, you don't even have to touch your phone during a conversation for it to negatively impact your relationship. Studies have reported that just the presence of the phone made people feel less connected.^{13,18}
- 3. Can't get through a meal without checking your phone:** The fear of missing out is real - a real sign you're phubbing.

Three ways to stop phubbing: If the idea of giving up social media makes you nervous and a little sick to your stomach, you're not alone. The urge to check social media is stronger than the urge for sex. That doesn't mean, however, that you can't learn other ways to check in with social media without scrolling endlessly.¹⁶

- 1. Make meals a no-phone zone:** When it's time to eat, no matter where you are, but the phone away. Mobile phones can be made into silent mode or into "do not disturb mode" because a distant buzz of notifications can cause distraction in mind. Engage in sincere conversation with each other and gradually comfort develops with having a face-to-face conversation.
- 2. Leave your phone behind:** You might feel as if you've lost a limb, but don't be afraid to simply put your phone in your car, desk drawer, or bag - and leave it there. Whatever alerts or updates happen, they'll be waiting for you later.

- 3. Challenge yourself:** Everyone enjoys a little prize now and then. Make ignoring your phone a challenge. Keep track of the meals or hours you go without your phone in hand. When you've completed a goal, treat yourself, and then challenge yourself again.

Three ways to help someone else stop phubbing:

- 1. Model a better behavior:** If you want to silently encourage the chronic phubber to stop, be a good example. Put your phone away when you're lounging on the couch. Don't encourage them to show you something on their phone during a date. Focus on the other people at the table. Slowly but surely, they'll get the hint.
- 2. Call them out:** There's nothing like hard love. If someone you regularly interact with has a habit of phubbing, tell them. The Stop Phubbing campaign will email your loved one a note about their behavior if a face-to-face conversation is too difficult or uncomfortable for you. Either way, tell them you don't like it, and then help them develop better habits.
- 3. Be sympathetic:** Phubbing isn't a real addiction, but it is an impulse problem. It will take some time to break all these impulses as well as learned behavior, so be patient and understanding, but be firm too.

When to seek help for phubbing?: Reading through your phone, again and again, can result in an impulse behavior you can't control. When you go through bad communications with your people, when you realize you are going into depression mode along with irritable behavior with frequent mood swings then if you have difficulty in stopping the habit, you may want to speak with a therapist or psychologist. They can help you learn to redirect your energy. They can also help you find out why you may have developed this impulse in the first place because, for many people, social media begins as an easy getaway, or a way to zone out.^{15,20} Therefore it is always better to seek help before it's too late.

Conclusion

Phubbing behavior is nerve-racking for the development of future generations. Therefore, it is required to provide proper guidance as well as counseling services to overcome the overruled behavioral pattern called phubbing that is being experienced by many people. The need for urgency of supervision and counseling services can be implemented in the form of

modules that should focus on "use smartphone smartly". We don't have to stop using our phones to prevent phubbing. We just have to be more aware. Being mindful of our actions when we are around other people is a great place to start.

We can also ask friends for accountability. If they feel like we are zoning into our phone, they should feel free to call our attention to it. Phubbing is a learned behavior - after all, it's only recently become a problem - and we can unlearn it. It will take time and some work, but our mental health and our valuable relationships will thank us for it.

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