

Phubbing and Its Impact on Student Communication and Relationship: A Qualitative Study on Coping Strategies and Social Implications

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Phubbing;
Interpersonal Relationships;
Coping Strategies

Article history:

Received 2024-08-07

Revised 2024-09-19

Accepted 2024-12-10

ABSTRACT

Phubbing—ignoring someone during interactions to focus on a smartphone—has emerged as a prevalent issue that negatively affects communication and interpersonal relationships, particularly among students. This study examines the impact of phubbing on students' relationships and explores coping strategies to mitigate its effects. A qualitative research approach was employed, involving in-depth interviews with five students from diverse academic and social backgrounds. The small sample size facilitated a detailed exploration of individual experiences and perspectives. Findings indicate that phubbing significantly harms interpersonal relationships by fostering feelings of disrespect, reducing attention, and undermining trust and intimacy. Participants reported experiencing frustration and diminished social interaction quality. Coping strategies identified include direct communication to address distractions, engaging in alternative activities, adapting behaviors to social contexts, and using humor to alleviate tension. The study highlights the detrimental effects of phubbing on student relationships and underscores the importance of addressing this behavior. Coping strategies identified offer practical tools for mitigating phubbing's impact, promoting healthier communication and stronger interpersonal bonds. Phubbing poses a substantial challenge to student relationships, necessitating greater awareness and proactive measures to improve communication and relational dynamics. Future initiatives should focus on educating students about the consequences of phubbing and fostering strategies to enhance relationship quality.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Phubbing, a term derived from the combination of "phone" and "snubbing," refers to the act of ignoring someone in a social setting by focusing on one's smartphone instead. This behavior has gained prominence with the widespread adoption of smartphones and has been shown to significantly alter social interactions. Individuals who experience phubbing often report feelings of annoyance and exclusion, which can lead to detrimental effects on their mental health and interpersonal relationships (Büttner et al., 2021; Al-Saggaf & O'Donnell, 2019). The urgency of addressing phubbing is underscored by its potential to foster social anxiety, depression, and relationship dissatisfaction, particularly in close relationships such as romantic partnerships and familial settings (David & Roberts, 2020; Xie & Xie, 2019).

Phubbing, which is the act of ignoring someone when interacting in order to use a smartphone, has become an increasingly common phenomenon in today's digital era. The importance of understanding phubbing lies in its significant impact on the quality of communication and interpersonal relationships. Phubbing can lead to feelings of being disrespected, decreased attention and focus in conversations, and interfering with trust and intimacy in relationships. These negative impacts not only affect the emotional well-being of individuals but can also damage the dynamics of social relationships as a whole. Therefore, understanding and overcoming phubbing is very important to maintain the quality of social interaction and improve interpersonal relationships among the community, especially among students who often experience intense social dynamics.

Based on the *State of Mobile 2024* report from Data.ai, mobile device usage in Indonesia has risen since the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2020, Indonesians used their devices for an average of 5.63 hours per day, increasing to 5.99 hours in 2021 and reaching a peak of 6.14 hours in 2022. However, in 2023, usage slightly dropped to 6.05 hours per day. Indonesia remains the only country with an average mobile usage exceeding 6 hours daily, making it the most "addicted" to mobile devices globally in 2023. This increase in mobile phone usage, particularly among younger generations such as students, corresponds with the rising phenomenon of phubbing, which is increasingly prevalent in educational and social settings.

Initial observations have shown that excessive smartphone use results in communication disruptions, with students often having difficulty continuing conversations smoothly and feeling a reduction in attention and focus from their interlocutors. This creates feelings of neglect and frustration felt by students, which leads to dissatisfaction in social interactions. The negative impact of phubbing is also evident in interpersonal relationships, where trust and intimacy in friendship and romantic relationships decline. Students who experienced phubbing reported reduced emotional closeness and trust due to a lack of attention in interactions.

Existing research highlights the detrimental effects of phubbing on communication and relationships, which provides a foundation for this study on its impact among students. Studies show that phubbing disrupts interactions through delayed responses, mechanical tones, and reduced eye contact, hindering effective communication (Aagaard, 2019). The phenomenon has been explored across various relationships, including parental phubbing and its impact on students' learning burnout, mediated by parent-child attachment and ego depletion (He et al., 2022). Additionally, research on adolescents points to how family dynamics contribute to smartphone addiction and phubbing behaviors (Kim, 2024). Further, phubbing's broader social implications, such as self- and partner-phubbing, significantly influence life satisfaction and interpersonal relationships (Mahmud, 2023). For instance, partner-phubbing diminishes relationship satisfaction by distracting one partner's attention (Gao, 2023), while phubbing in general evokes negative emotions and fosters alienation (Saleem, 2023). This study aims to build upon these findings by focusing on how phubbing affects student communication and relationships, examining coping strategies and the deeper social impacts of this behavior within the academic context. One effective coping strategy involves enhancing emotional intelligence. Research indicates that individuals with higher emotional intelligence are less likely to engage in negative social comparisons and can focus on positive aspects of their experiences, thereby reducing psychological distress associated with phubbing (Arshad, 2024). Furthermore, fostering strong peer relationships can serve as a buffer against the feelings of loneliness and deprivation that often accompany phubbing, as

supportive peers can provide emotional and practical assistance (Wang & Lei, 2022).

Previous research highlights several gaps in understanding phubbing and its effects. First, while much is known about phubbing's impact on communication and individual behavior, its specific effects on the dynamics of student relationships are underexplored. Phubbing may undermine trust and relationship quality in campus settings, which is critical for collaboration and support among students. Addressing this gap is crucial, as the consequences of phubbing in academic environments can be more detrimental compared to other relationship types. Second, although phubbing's effects in family and educational contexts have been studied, there is a lack of research on how college students use coping strategies to counteract these effects. With the rise of mobile phone use, students' social and academic interactions have shifted, making effective coping strategies essential for maintaining mental well-being and relationship quality. Third, there is a need to study how phubbing interacts with recent technological advancements. Understanding the impact of new devices and applications on interpersonal dynamics will provide insights into how evolving technology shapes social behavior and help in developing relevant strategies to address the challenges posed by rapid technological changes.

This research is crucial for gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of phubbing, particularly in how it affects trust, communication, and the overall quality of interpersonal relationships among students. By identifying effective coping strategies, the study aims to address the negative consequences of phubbing on students' social interactions and emotional well-being, which have not been sufficiently explored in previous research. Additionally, this study will examine the influence of modern technology on these dynamics, integrating insights from recent technological developments. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of targeted interventions to enhance the quality of social relationships and improve students' emotional health. In doing so, the study directly addresses the existing research gaps by focusing on the unique challenges faced by students in navigating phubbing behaviors in an increasingly digitalized academic and social environment.

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with phenomenological design to deeply understand students' subjective experiences and perceptions related to the impact of phubbing on the dynamics of their interpersonal relationships. The study participants were selected by purposive sampling with the criteria of active students aged 18-25 years who have experience or witness phubbing behavior in their interpersonal interactions and are willing to participate in in-depth interviews. Interviews were conducted with 5 students who met the criteria. Although this study initially includes 5 participants, the primary goal is to achieve data saturation. If new themes or insights continue to emerge beyond the initial interviews, additional participants will be incorporated to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research topic and to capture all relevant patterns and perspectives. Data were collected through in-depth interviews conducted in a semi-structured manner with interview guides that focused on participants' personal experiences with phubbing, their perceptions of the impact of phubbing on interpersonal relationships, and how they coped with or responded to phubbing in interpersonal relationships.

Interviews are recorded with participants' consent and transcribed for analysis. The interview guide was developed based on a thorough review of the literature on phubbing and digital communication, using relevant frameworks from prior studies to ensure the questions addressed key aspects of phubbing's impact on relationships. The guide was refined through interview trials before conducting the actual interviews. Data is analyzed using thematic analysis, with transcripts reviewed to identify and interpret themes. Validity and reliability are ensured through data triangulation and member checking with participants. Two interview trials were conducted to refine the interview guide, leading to adjustments in question-wording and focus. The main interviews followed, and data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Validity and reliability are ensured through data triangulation and member checking.

To manage researcher bias in interpreting subjective experiences, the study will use strategies such as peer debriefing and reflective journaling. Peer debriefing involves discussing findings with colleagues to gain multiple perspectives, while reflective journaling helps the researcher identify and address personal biases and

assumptions. Thematic analysis in this study will follow a structured approach to ensure a thorough examination of the data. The process begins with familiarizing oneself with the data by repeatedly reading the transcripts to gain a deep understanding. Initial coding will then be performed, where key ideas are identified and labeled. These codes will be organized into broader themes, with related codes grouped together to reveal patterns and connections. The themes will be reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represent the data, with each theme clearly defined and named to reflect its core content. Finally, the themes will be integrated into a cohesive narrative that addresses the research questions. This approach, guided by Braun and Clarke's model, ensures a rigorous and systematic interpretation of the subjective experiences shared by participants.

The ethical aspect of research is considered by maintaining the confidentiality of participants' identities and personal information, obtaining informed consent before interviews, and maintaining data integrity and transparency in reporting research results. The results of the study will be presented in a descriptive form by quoting directly from the interview transcript to support the main findings. The interpretation of the results will be discussed in the context of existing literature and its implications for the dynamics of student interpersonal relationships. This research method is expected to provide a deep understanding of the impact of phubbing on interpersonal relationships among students and offer new insights to develop interventions or educational programs to address this problem.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Personal Experience Related to Phubbing

Participants' personal experiences related to phubbing revealed that this action is interpreted as ignoring others when interacting directly because they are busy with smartphones.

"Phubbing is when we ignore other people when we are chatting because we are engrossed in playing cellphones. It doesn't feel good when the person in front of us is busy with his cellphone." (P1. 10 July 2024)

The same thing was conveyed by P2 who defined phubbing as

"When we focus more on the cellphone screen than the person in front of us. Usually this happens when we get together with friends." (P2. 10 July 2024)

Phubbing is reported to occur frequently in a variety of everyday social situations, especially when eating together or when watching movies together.

"Phubbing often happens when we are eating together in the cafeteria or when we are watching movies together. I often see friends who are even busy with their cellphones instead of chatting." (P3. 10 July 2024)

"In everyday life, phubbing happens quite often. For example, when we are in a group discussion or even when we are chatting casually in a café, there must be someone who plays cellphones." (P4. 10 July 2024)

Participants' reactions to phubbing were generally negative, with feelings of sadness, disappointment, anger, and frustration.

"It feels sad and disappointed when friends or partners prefer to play cellphones instead of chatting directly. We feel unappreciated." (P5. 10 July 2024)

Meanwhile, P1 felt angry and frustrated when his friends started playing on cellphones while chatting, so that the conversation became disconnected and focus was disturbed. Phubbing also has a

negative impact on students' interpersonal relationships, eliciting various emotional responses depending on the type of relationship.

"Phubbing makes the quality of communication decrease. We become less attentive and focused in conversations, and that interferes with our relationships." (P2. 10 July 2024)

In friendships, phubbing often triggers frustration and anger, as individuals may feel ignored or undervalued, which challenges trust and connection. In romantic relationships, the emotional impact is more profound, often causing sadness and feelings of rejection or neglect, which can disrupt intimacy and emotional closeness. Students in romantic relationships may feel disconnected from their partners due to the distraction of phubbing, which interferes with the development of closeness. Coping strategies differ based on the relationship context: friends might address phubbing directly, while romantic partners might try to avoid conflict by ignoring the behavior, potentially exacerbating emotional strain. Personal experiences significantly shape these emotional responses; individuals who have previously experienced neglect may react more intensely to being ignored in current relationships, resulting in heightened feelings of rejection or unimportance.

These emotional reactions often dictate how people interact with others. In relationships, such as friendships or romantic partnerships, emotional responses can either strengthen or strain the connection. For example, positive past experiences may foster trust and intimacy, allowing individuals to handle conflicts with more patience and empathy. Conversely, negative experiences can lead to defensive behaviors, where emotional reactions like anger or sadness create distance, reduce communication quality, and hinder emotional closeness. Thus, personal experiences shape how individuals perceive and react emotionally, which directly impacts the dynamics of their interpersonal relationships, influencing trust, connection, and communication.

Phubbing undermines trust and intimacy because it interrupts the essential need for undivided attention in relationships. When someone is distracted by their smartphone during interactions, it signals that the digital world is more important than the person in front of them. This breach of social norms leads to feelings of neglect and emotional distance, weakening trust and diminishing the emotional connection necessary for intimacy (Grieve et al., 2021; Al-Saggaf & O'Donnell, 2019). The symbolic meaning of smartphones further deepens the issue. Smartphones represent social status and connectivity, so when individuals prioritize them over face-to-face conversations, it can be perceived as prioritizing virtual relationships over real ones, eroding trust (Guazzini et al., 2019; Han et al., 2022). This behavior is especially damaging in romantic relationships but also affects friendships and workplace dynamics, leading to reduced satisfaction, communication quality, and emotional closeness (Pandey, 2023; Ridwan et al., 2022).

From the results of this interview, it can be concluded that phubbing is a phenomenon that often occurs among students and has a negative impact on the quality of their communication and interpersonal relationships. Phubbing leads to feelings of being disappreciated, decreased attention and focus in conversations, and difficulty building trust and intimacy in relationships. The negative reaction to phubbing shows the importance of paying more attention to the use of smartphones in daily social interactions.

3.2 The Impact of Phubbing on Interpersonal Relationships

Based on the results of the study, it can be seen that phubbing has a significant impact on the quality of communication between students.

"Phubbing makes conversations ineffective because attention is divided. It feels like talking to a wall when the person in front of us is engrossed in his cellphone." (P1. 10 July 2024)

This statement shows that phubbing degrades the quality of communication by reducing attention and focus in conversations, which ultimately makes interactions ineffective. In addition, phubbing also

has an impact on satisfaction in friendship and romantic relationships.

"When my partner or friends prefer to play cellphones rather than talk directly, I feel disrespected and this makes our relationship strained." (P2. 10 July 2024)

Phubbing creates feelings of neglect and underappreciation, which negatively impacts relationship satisfaction.

"Phubbing often leads to minor arguments because it feels ignored. This is very disruptive and lowers satisfaction in relationships." (P3. 10 July 2024)

Phubbing also affects the level of trust and intimacy in interpersonal relationships.

"It's hard to build trust when a friend or partner is more focused on their cellphone. It makes me feel unimportant." (P4. 10 July 2024)

This reflects that phubbing reduces levels of trust and intimacy, making participants feel unimportant in the relationship.

"Intimacy in relationships is diminished due to phubbing. It becomes more difficult for us to talk about important or personal things because our attention is divided." (P5. 10 July 2024)

Overall, the results of these interviews revealed that phubbing had a significant negative impact on students' interpersonal relationships. Phubbing decreases the quality of communication, reduces relationship satisfaction, and interferes with trust and intimacy. Participants felt neglected, underappreciated, and had difficulty building close relationships. These findings point to the need to increase awareness about the impact of phubbing and the importance of managing smartphone use in social interactions to maintain the quality of interpersonal relationships.

3.3 Coping Response and Strategy to Phubbing

The results of the interviews showed that students had various emotional responses to phubbing, as well as varied coping strategies to overcome its impact. In general, the emotional response that arises as a result of phubbing is feelings of anger, frustration, sadness, and disappointment.

"When friends start playing cellphones while chatting, it feels like they are not appreciated. I feel angry and frustrated because the conversation doesn't connect." (P1. 10 July 2024)

This statement reflects the feelings of anger and frustration that arise when phubbing occurs in social interactions. Students also reported coping strategies used to overcome the negative impact of phubbing. Some participants chose to communicate their feelings directly to friends or partners who were phubbing.

"I usually talk directly and tell them that phubbing is annoying. That way, they become more aware and try to reduce the use of cellphones when we are together." (P2. 10 July 2024)

This direct communication approach helps to improve the situation and raise awareness of the negative impacts of phubbing. In addition to direct communication, some students choose to use more indirect coping strategies.

"Sometimes I choose to distract myself by doing other things, such as reading a book or talking to other

people who are not busy with their cellphones." (P3. 10 July 2024)

This strategy allows participants to maintain their emotional health without having to engage in direct confrontation. Some participants also reported the use of adaptive strategies to deal with phubbing.

"I try to understand that friends may not be aware of the impact of phubbing. I try to be more patient and give them time to finish what they're doing on the phone before continuing the conversation." (P4. 10 July 2024)

This adaptive strategy shows an effort to accept the situation and tolerate phubbing behavior, even if it still has certain limitations.

"I like to joke around and say something like 'hey, your HP is more interesting than mine huh?' This usually makes them aware and refocused on the conversation." (P5. 10 July 2024)

Humor is used as a way to reduce tension and make the situation more comfortable for all parties involved. Overall, the results of these interviews revealed that students had a variety of emotional responses to phubbing, including anger, frustration, sadness, and disappointment. They also use a variety of coping strategies, such as direct communication, distraction, adaptation, and humor to overcome the negative effects of phubbing. The effectiveness of these strategies can vary depending on the context or type of relationship. For instance, in romantic relationships, direct communication is often more effective because it fosters openness and allows both partners to express their concerns, thus reinforcing trust and intimacy. In contrast, humor or distraction may be preferable in friendships, where the stakes might be lower, and these strategies can help defuse tension without causing conflict. Adaptation, which involves accepting the behavior over time, might be common in long-term relationships, though it can lead to further emotional distance if not addressed. These findings underscore the importance of understanding how phubbing impacts different relationships and developing context-appropriate coping strategies to maintain the quality of social interactions and interpersonal bonds.

Problem-focused coping, such as direct communication, is more effective in romantic relationships where addressing phubbing directly can help resolve issues and restore trust. In contrast, emotion-focused coping strategies like distraction, humor, or adaptation are more suited to friendships or casual relationships, where maintaining harmony may be prioritized over confronting the behavior. Balancing these approaches based on the relationship type can improve the effectiveness of coping strategies and help preserve the quality of social interactions and relationships.

The study highlights the need for individuals to balance both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies depending on the nature of the relationship and the context in which phubbing occurs. In more emotionally invested relationships, problem-focused strategies may be crucial for long-term relational satisfaction, whereas emotion-focused strategies might be more appropriate in casual or less intimate interactions. Understanding this distinction can help individuals choose more effective coping mechanisms to maintain the quality of their social interactions and relationships.

The relationship between emotions and coping responses can significantly enhance the analysis of phubbing's impact on interpersonal relationships. Different emotions often lead to distinct coping mechanisms. For instance, participants who feel anger in response to phubbing might use humor as a coping strategy to defuse tension and avoid conflict, especially in friendships or casual settings. Humor can act as a buffer, allowing individuals to express frustration without directly confronting the issue, thereby maintaining social harmony. Conversely, those who feel sadness due to phubbing may be more inclined to adapt or disengage. Sadness often reflects feelings of rejection or emotional neglect, which can lead to passive coping strategies like adaptation, where individuals gradually accept the behavior, or disengagement, where they emotionally withdraw from the relationship. These responses may be

more common in long-term relationships, where the individual may feel powerless to change the situation or avoid confrontation for the sake of preserving the relationship.

Table 1. Interview Results Framework

No	Main Theme	Subtopic	Description	Conclusion of Interview Results
1.	Participant's Personal Experience with Phubbing	Definisi Phubbing	Participants' perception of what phubbing is.	Phubbing is defined as the act of ignoring others when interacting directly because they use smartphones, often occurring in everyday social situations.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Definition - Behavior - Occurrence - Impact on Interaction 	Examples of phubbing situations that they experience or witness	
		Frequency and Situation	The frequency of phubbing events in daily interactions. Specific situations in which phubbing occurs most often (e.g., during a meal together, during group discussions)	Phubbing often occurs in a variety of social situations, especially when eating together or in group meetings, interfering with direct interaction
	Comparative Analysis:	Participants consistently described phubbing as a phenomenon where individuals neglect face-to-face interactions in favor of engaging with their mobile phones. For instance, P1 and P2 defined phubbing as the act of prioritizing mobile phone use over direct communication, particularly during social gatherings or casual conversations. P3 elaborated on the common occurrence of phubbing in specific settings, such as during meals or movie viewings, where the engagement with mobile devices often supersedes interpersonal dialogue. P4 and P5 further highlighted that phubbing is prevalent in daily social interactions, including group discussions and casual meetings at cafés. This widespread occurrence underscores the pervasive nature of phubbing and its impact on interpersonal dynamics.		
2.	The Impact of Phubbing on Interpersonal Relationships	Quality of Communication	The effect of phubbing on the quality of communication between students. Decreased attention and focus in conversation.	Phubbing degrades the quality of communication by reducing attention and focus in conversations, causing communication to become less effective
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduced Attention - Decreased Focus - Lowered Communication Effectiveness - Impaired Emotional Connection - Increased Misunderstandings 		
		Relationship Satisfaction	The impact of phubbing on satisfaction in a friendship or romantic relationship. Feelings of neglect or underappreciated due to phubbing.	Phubbing reduces relationship satisfaction, makes participants feel neglected and undervalued, reduces the quality of friendship and romantic relationships
		Trust and Intimacy	The effect of phubbing on the level of trust and intimacy in the relationship. Difficulties in building trust due to phubbing behavior	Phubbing reduces the level of trust and intimacy in relationships, creating difficulties in building and maintaining trust
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction in Trust - Decreased Intimacy - Difficulty in Building Trust 		

No	Main Theme	Subtopic	Description	Conclusion of Interview Results
	Comparative Analysis:		The participants reported significant adverse effects of phubbing on relationship quality. P1 and P2 indicated that phubbing diminishes the effectiveness of conversations and leads to feelings of being undervalued. P2 noted that such behavior often results in strained relationships and a sense of disrespect. P3 mentioned that phubbing frequently triggers minor conflicts and decreases overall relationship satisfaction due to the feelings of neglect it engenders. P4 observed that trust and intimacy are compromised when individuals focus more on their phones than on their conversation partners, which leads to feelings of being unimportant. P5 corroborated these observations by noting that phubbing undermines relationship intimacy, making it challenging to discuss significant or personal matters effectively due to divided attention	
3.	Coping Response Strategy to Phubbing	Strategies to Overcome Phubbing	Ways that students do to overcome or respond to phubbing. Direct (e.g., talking openly with the perpetrator) and indirect (e.g., distracting attention to other activities)	Students overcome phubbing with direct strategies such as talking openly with the perpetrator, or indirect strategies such as diverting attention to other activities.
		Adaptation in Relationships	Behavioral adaptations are carried out to maintain the quality of relationships despite phubbing.	Some college students adapt by accepting or tolerating phubbing in certain situations to maintain the quality of their relationships
		- Acceptance of Behavior	Acceptance or tolerance of phubbing in certain situations	
		- Tolerance in Social Settings		
		- Strategic Compromise		
	Comparative Analysis:		Participants employed various strategies to address and cope with the effects of phubbing. P1 expressed frustration and anger when conversations are disrupted by mobile phone use, leading to a sense of disconnection. P2 responded by directly addressing the issue with individuals, expressing their annoyance and encouraging a reduction in phone usage during interactions. P3 opted to mitigate the impact of phubbing by distracting themselves with other activities, such as reading or engaging with other non-phubbing individuals. P4 demonstrated patience and understanding, allowing time for phone use to be completed before resuming conversations. P5 utilized humor as a coping mechanism, making light-hearted comments to refocus attention and ease the tension, thereby facilitating a more comfortable and engaging interaction	

Discussion

Phubbing, or prioritizing smartphones over interactions with others, significantly undermines relationship quality. The study found that phubbing leads to feelings of disappreciation among college students, affecting their perception of social presence. It diminishes attention and focus in conversations, making interactions less meaningful and more frequently disrupted by smartphone use. This reduction in communication effectiveness hampers deep conversations and mutual sharing. Additionally, phubbing impedes trust and intimacy, as divided attention undermines efforts to build close relationships and emotional connections. Consequently, students perceive that phubbing degrades emotional intimacy and damages trust in their relationships. Phubbing, a term derived from "phone" and "snubbing," refers to the act of ignoring others in social interactions by being engrossed in one's mobile phone (Khodabakhsh & Ong, 2021). This behavior has been associated with various negative consequences on interpersonal relationships. Studies have shown that phubbing can lead to feelings of exclusion, frustration, and a decrease in the quality of conversations, ultimately impacting the closeness and connection between individuals (Peleg, 2024).

The findings from the current study both reinforce and expand upon previous research on phubbing. The study confirms the definition and negative impacts of phubbing—such as feelings of exclusion and frustration—previously identified by Khodabakhsh and Ong (2021) and Peleg (2024). Phubbing, the act of ignoring others in favor of focusing on a smartphone, has been shown to significantly diminish the quality of communication and interpersonal relationships among students. This phenomenon disrupts social interactions by causing conversations to become less effective and leading to feelings of neglect and disrespect. The study not only validates these detrimental effects but also provides new insights by detailing specific contexts where phubbing commonly occurs, such as during meals or group discussions. Additionally, it introduces a range of coping strategies, including direct communication and humor, which have been less explored in prior research. These findings enrich the understanding of phubbing's impact and offer practical approaches for managing its effects, highlighting the importance of addressing phubbing to maintain healthy and fulfilling relationships.

Research indicates that phubbing behaviors can lead to a deterioration of parent-child relationships, as parents who engage in phubbing may inadvertently communicate neglect to their children, resulting in psychological distress for the latter (Zhang, 2023; Solecki, 2022). The motivations behind phubbing can be understood through the lens of digital social multitasking (DSMT). Adolescents, in particular, may engage in phubbing as a means of coping with boredom or seeking social validation through their devices (Yang et al., 2023; Duradoni, 2023).

Phubbing triggers negative emotional responses, such as anger, frustration, sadness, and disappointment, which further exacerbates the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. Students feel their relationships are disrupted by the reliance on smartphones, which hinders effective and in-depth communication. Research indicates that phubbing has a significant negative effect on student interpersonal relationships. Studies have shown that phubbing can lead to reduced relationship satisfaction, impaired communication quality, decreased wellbeing, and even alienation among adolescents (Gao, 2023). Phubbing behavior has been associated with procrastination, low achievement, impaired concentration, and loss of social disclosure, all of which contribute to a decline in the quality of friendships and peer relationships (Parus et al., 2021).

The current study supports and extends previous research by Gao (2023) and Parus et al. (2021). It reinforces Gao's findings on how phubbing negatively affects relationship satisfaction and communication quality, showing similar impacts of diminished well-being and feelings of alienation. Additionally, it corroborates Parus et al.'s observations of phubbing's association with impaired concentration and reduced social engagement. The study adds new insights by specifying contexts where phubbing occurs and introducing various coping strategies, thereby providing a more detailed understanding of phubbing's effects and practical ways to address them.

Through in-depth interviews with five college students, it was found that phubbing not only affected the quality of communication, but also triggered a variety of negative emotional responses. Participants reported feelings of anger, frustration, sadness, and disappointment in reaction to the phubbing behaviors they experienced in daily social interactions. This shows that phubbing has a significant impact on the emotional well-being of students. In addition, this study also identifies various coping strategies used by students to overcome the negative impact of phubbing. These strategies vary from direct communication to express feelings to the perpetrator, to distraction and adaptation to maintain their emotional health. Some participants also reported using humor as a way to defuse tension and improve situations. Participants reported using humor to defuse tension and redirect focus back to the conversation, suggesting that humor helps mitigate the discomfort associated with being ignored. Humor works in this context by lightening the atmosphere and easing the emotional strain, which can make it easier to re-engage with someone who is distracted by their smartphone. This approach allows participants to address the issue of phubbing in a non-confrontational manner, which can help maintain a positive interaction despite the initial disruption. This is as well as research by Lai et al (2022) which explains that college students exhibit a range of emotional responses to phubbing, including anger, frustration, sadness, and disappointment. Phubbing, defined as the act of snubbing others by focusing on smartphones in social interactions, has been identified as a prevalent issue among college students.

Studies have shown that phubbing negatively impacts impression formation, communication quality, and peer relationships among college students, leading to reduced well-being of individuals involved (Lv & Wang, 2023). Moreover, severe negative emotions resulting from parental marital conflict can contribute to increased phubbing behavior in college students (Zhang et al., 2022).

Based on the results of the study, it was also found that phubbing not only affects the quality of communication, but also triggers various negative emotional responses. Students report feelings of anger, frustration, sadness, and disappointment as common reactions to phubbing. However, in addition to emotional responses, this study also reveals various coping strategies used by students to overcome these negative impacts. The participants used a variety of coping strategies that included direct communication, distraction, adaptation, and humor. Direct communication involves participants conveying their feelings to the phubbing perpetrator, which aims to increase awareness and reduce phubbing behavior. Distraction is done by directing the focus to other activities that are more productive or fun. Adaptation involves making an effort to accept and understand the situation, while humor is used as a tool to defuse tension and create a more comfortable atmosphere. In line with research conducted by Umucu & Lee (2020) that coping strategies are essential for managing stress and enhancing psychological well-being. These strategies can be classified into problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, social support, religious coping, and meaning-making (Ambikile, 2023). In the context of managing challenges like phubbing, adaptive coping mechanisms involving humor, active problem-solving, and positive interpretation of situations have been demonstrated to expedite stress resolution and support psychological well-being (Otsuka et al., 2021). Moreover, employing humor as a coping mechanism has been linked to perceiving situations as less stressful (Canestrari et al., 2021).

The study supports the conclusions of Gao (2023) and Parus et al. (2021) by confirming that phubbing negatively affects communication quality, relationship satisfaction, and emotional well-being. Like Gao's research, it highlights how phubbing leads to feelings of exclusion and frustration, and aligns with Parus et al.'s observations of impaired concentration and reduced social engagement due to smartphone use. This validation reinforces existing knowledge about the detrimental impacts of phubbing on interpersonal relationships and emotional health. The study also adds new dimensions to the understanding of phubbing. It specifies the contexts in which phubbing frequently occurs—such as during meals or group discussions—and introduces a range of coping strategies, including direct communication, distraction, adaptation, and humor. This additional detail enriches the understanding of how phubbing affects daily social interactions and provides practical methods for managing its effects. The findings align with Umucu & Lee (2020) and Ambikile (2023), who emphasize the importance of adaptive coping strategies in managing stress, and extend previous research by exploring how these strategies can mitigate the impact of phubbing. Overall, the study not only reinforces existing findings on the negative effects of phubbing but also offers new insights into its occurrence and management, enhancing the broader understanding of this phenomenon in social contexts.

This study has several limitations, the small sample size of only five participants limits the generalizability of the findings to a broader student population, as a larger sample would be needed to capture a wider range of experiences. Additionally, potential biases may have influenced the results, such as participants providing more self-conscious or socially desirable responses when reflecting on their experiences with phubbing. Those who agreed to participate may also have had stronger opinions or more negative experiences, which could skew the findings. Lastly, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of memory recall inaccuracies and personal interpretations of events, which should be considered when evaluating the study's conclusions.

Future research should explore phubbing in different cultural contexts to understand how cultural norms and values may influence its impact on interpersonal relationships. Expanding the sample size in future studies would provide more representative data and improve the generalizability of findings. Additionally, examining how different personality types respond to phubbing could offer deeper insights into the psychological factors that mediate reactions to phubbing, helping to tailor coping strategies more effectively. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to assess whether the effects of phubbing evolve over time, providing a more dynamic understanding of its long-term impact on

relationship quality and communication patterns.

4. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant emotional and relational consequences of phubbing on students, emphasizing its potential to weaken face-to-face interactions, empathy, and active listening skills, ultimately leading to loneliness and social isolation. To mitigate these impacts, educational campaigns should raise awareness of phubbing's effects, while students are encouraged to manage smartphone use wisely and adopt effective coping strategies such as direct communication, distraction, adaptation, and humor. Promoting non-digital social activities and implementing policies to limit smartphone use in social settings can enhance interaction quality. Teaching technology usage ethics and providing psychological support to address phubbing's emotional toll are also essential. However, the study's limitations, including a small sample size, potential participant bias, and reliance on self-reported data, highlight the need for broader research. Future studies should explore diverse cultural contexts, personality traits, and the long-term effects of phubbing through longitudinal methods to provide comprehensive insights. Expanding research scope can inform strategies to foster healthier interpersonal relationships and balance digital and in-person interactions in a rapidly digitalizing world.

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