

PHUBBING AND ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL OUTCOMES AMONG YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

The increasing use of smartphones has introduced new patterns of communication that influence face-to-face social interactions. One such behavior, commonly referred to as phubbing, occurs when individuals focus on their mobile devices while interacting with others in person. The present study aims to examine the psychological implications of phubbing among youth, with particular emphasis on its relationship with attachment style, loneliness, and resilience. A systematic review approach was employed following the guidelines of the PRISMA 2020 Statement. Relevant studies were identified through searches of major academic databases, and thirty-six empirical studies meeting the inclusion criteria were analysed. The findings indicate that phubbing is frequently associated with negative interpersonal and psychological outcomes, including reduced relationship satisfaction, increased feelings of loneliness, and disruptions in social interaction. Evidence also suggests that problematic smartphone use plays an important role in predicting phubbing behavior. In addition, psychological characteristics such as attachment patterns and resilience appear to influence how individuals respond to technology-mediated distractions during social encounters. Overall, the review highlights the need for greater awareness of balanced smartphone use and encourages further research exploring the psychological processes underlying phubbing behavior among youth.

Key words: Phubbing, Attachment Styles, Smart Phone Use, Loneliness, Psychological Resilience, Youth, Interpersonal Relationships.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid proliferation of smartphones has transformed the way individuals communicate and interact in everyday life. Mobile technologies enable continuous connectivity and instant access to information; however, their increasing presence in social environments has also introduced new forms of interpersonal disruption. One such phenomenon is phubbing, a behavior that occurs when an individual ignores or neglects a person present in a social interaction in favor of using a smartphone. The term was first popularized by researchers such as James A. Roberts and Meredith E. David, who described phubbing as a technology-driven behavior that may negatively influence relationship quality and social interactions.

Over the past decade, research on phubbing has expanded across multiple disciplines, including psychology, communication studies, and behavioural science. Empirical studies suggest that frequent engagement in phubbing can disrupt face-to-face communication and diminish the quality of interpersonal relationships. For example, studies examining romantic relationships indicate that

partner phubbing is associated with reduced relationship satisfaction, increased interpersonal conflict, and feelings of neglect during social interactions. When individuals perceive that their partners prioritize smartphones over direct communication, it may lead to perceptions of exclusion and emotional disconnection.

Beyond romantic relationships, phubbing has also been examined in the context of general social interactions and psychological well-being. Research conducted in different cultural contexts suggests that individuals who experience phubbing during conversations often report feeling ignored, socially excluded, or undervalued in interpersonal exchanges. Studies by Chotpitayasunondh and Karen M. Douglas indicate that phubbing can negatively affect perceptions of social inclusion and reduce satisfaction with face-to-face interactions. These findings suggest that the growing integration of smartphones into daily life may alter traditional patterns of communication and influence how individuals experience social relationships.

A substantial body of research has also examined the psychological correlates of phubbing behavior.

Several studies have reported associations between phubbing and adverse mental health outcomes, including loneliness, depressive symptoms, and social anxiety. Individuals who frequently engage in smartphone-mediated interactions during social encounters may experience reduced emotional engagement with others, potentially contributing to feelings of social isolation. At the same time, individuals experiencing loneliness or psychological distress may be more likely to turn to smartphones as a coping mechanism, creating a cyclical relationship between digital distraction and psychological well-being.

Another important factor frequently associated with phubbing is smartphone addiction or problematic smartphone use. Many studies have identified excessive smartphone use as one of the strongest predictors of phubbing behavior. Individuals with higher levels of smartphone dependency often report difficulty disengaging from their devices even during face-to-face interactions. This compulsive engagement with smartphones may interfere with attention during interpersonal encounters and contribute to increased phubbing behaviors. Consequently, researchers increasingly view phubbing not only as a social behavior but also as a manifestation of broader patterns of problematic technology use.

While the existing literature has provided valuable insights into the consequences of phubbing, several psychological processes underlying this behavior remain insufficiently explored. In particular, relatively limited research has examined the role of attachment style in shaping individuals' engagement with smartphones during interpersonal interactions. Attachment theory suggests that individuals develop characteristic patterns of emotional bonding and interpersonal expectations based on early relational experiences. These attachment patterns may influence how individuals regulate closeness, attention, and emotional engagement within social relationships. Exploring the relationship between attachment styles and phubbing may therefore provide deeper insight into the interpersonal dynamics associated with smartphone-mediated distraction.

Similarly, the relationship between phubbing and loneliness has received increasing attention in recent years. Loneliness represents a subjective perception of inadequate social connection and has been widely linked to digital communication behaviors. Some researchers argue that excessive smartphone use may contribute to loneliness by reducing meaningful face-to-face interaction, while others suggest that lonely individuals may rely more heavily on digital communication to compensate for unmet social needs. Understanding how phubbing relates to loneliness is particularly important in the context of youth populations, who represent some of the most

active users of smartphones and social networking platforms.

Another construct that may play an important role in understanding the psychological consequences of phubbing is resilience. Psychological resilience refers to the capacity to adapt effectively to stress, adversity, or challenging life circumstances. Individuals with higher levels of resilience may be better equipped to maintain healthy interpersonal relationships and regulate technology use in social settings. Despite the potential relevance of resilience in buffering negative psychological outcomes, relatively few studies have examined how resilience relates to phubbing behavior or its associated effects on well-being.

Furthermore, although the majority of phubbing research has been conducted in Western and East Asian contexts, comparatively fewer studies have explored this phenomenon in developing countries such as India. Cultural differences in family structures, social interaction patterns, and technology adoption may influence how phubbing manifests within interpersonal relationships. Given the rapid expansion of smartphone usage among Indian youth, examining the psychological correlates of phubbing within this context is particularly important.

Taken together, the existing literature suggests that phubbing represents a complex behavioral phenomenon associated with multiple psychological and relational outcomes. However, limited research has simultaneously examined the interconnected roles of attachment style, loneliness, and resilience in shaping phubbing behavior among youth. Investigating these variables together may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying technology-related interpersonal disruption.

Therefore, the present study aims to examine the impact of phubbing on attachment style, loneliness, and resilience among youth. By exploring the relationships among these constructs, the study seeks to provide deeper insight into the psychological dynamics associated with smartphone-mediated distraction and its implications for interpersonal well-being.

METHODOLOGY

The systematic review was conducted following the guidelines of the PRISMA 2020 Statement. The PRISMA framework provides standardized procedures for identifying, screening, and selecting relevant studies for systematic reviews and meta-analyses. The review aimed to synthesize empirical evidence examining the impact of phubbing on psychological and social outcomes among youth.

Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted across multiple electronic databases to identify relevant studies examining phubbing behavior and its associated outcomes. The databases searched included Scopus, Web of Science, PsycINFO, PubMed, and Google Scholar. The search strategy included combinations of keywords related to phubbing and its psychological correlates.

The following keywords and Boolean operators were used:

- “Phubbing” OR “partner phubbing”
- “Smartphone distraction” OR “phone snubbing”
- “Smartphone addiction” AND “phubbing”
- “Phubbing AND loneliness”
- “Phubbing AND relationship satisfaction”
- “Phubbing AND mental health”

The search was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles published in English. Additionally, reference lists of relevant studies were manually screened to identify any additional eligible studies.

Inclusion And Exclusion Criteria

Studies were included in the review if they met the following criteria:

1. Empirical studies examining phubbing behavior or partner phubbing.
2. Studies investigating psychological, social, or relational outcomes associated with phubbing.
3. Studies published in peer-reviewed journals.
4. Articles written in English.
5. Studies involving adolescents, young adults, or adult populations.

Studies were excluded if they met any of the following criteria:

1. Conceptual papers, editorials, or review articles without empirical data.
2. Studies not directly examining phubbing behavior.
3. Conference abstracts or unpublished manuscripts.
4. Non-English publications.

Study Selection Process

The study selection process followed the PRISMA framework. Initially, 225 records were identified through database searches and additional sources. After removing 40 duplicate records, 185 studies remained for title and abstract screening.

During the screening phase, 125 studies were excluded due to lack of relevance to phubbing or failure to meet the inclusion criteria. Subsequently, 60 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility. After full-text evaluation, 24 articles were excluded because they did not meet the eligibility criteria or lacked relevant variables.

Finally, 36 studies were included in the qualitative synthesis for the present systematic review. The study selection process is illustrated in the PRISMA flow diagram.

Data Extraction

Relevant information from the included studies was systematically extracted using a structured data extraction framework. The extracted information included:

- Author(s) and year of publication
- Country of study
- Sample characteristics and sample size
- Study design and methodology
- Variables examined
- Measurement instruments used
- Key finding

This information is summarized in a characteristic of included studies table.

Data Synthesis

Due to the heterogeneity of study designs, measures, and outcomes across the included studies, a narrative synthesis approach was employed. The findings were grouped into thematic categories based on the major constructs examined in the literature, including:

- phubbing and mental health outcomes
- phubbing and romantic relationships
- phubbing and social interaction
- phubbing and smartphone addiction
- individual differences associated with phubbing behavior

RESEARCH GAPS

The systematic review of the studies reveals several important gaps in the existing literature on phubbing and its psychological and relational outcomes.

1. **Limited Integration of Multiple Psychological Variables:** Although previous studies have examined the relationship between phubbing and individual psychological outcomes such as loneliness, depression, or social anxiety, most studies have focused on single variables in isolation. Few studies have investigated the combined role of multiple psychological constructs such as attachment style, loneliness, and resilience within a single research framework. Consequently, the complex interplay between these psychological factors and phubbing behavior remains insufficiently explored.
2. **Limited Research on Protective Psychological Factors:** The majority of studies have focused primarily on the negative outcomes associated with phubbing, including reduced relationship satisfaction, increased loneliness, and psychological distress. However, relatively little research has examined protective factors that may buffer or mitigate the negative impact of phubbing. In particular, the role of psychological resilience as a potential moderating or protective factor has received limited empirical attention.

3. **Insufficient Research in Developing Country Contexts:** While the concept of phubbing has gained increasing attention globally, a substantial proportion of empirical studies have been conducted in Western and East Asian countries. Comparatively fewer studies have examined phubbing behavior within developing country contexts such as India, where patterns of smartphone use, cultural norms of social interaction, and family dynamics may differ significantly. This highlights the need for further research examining phubbing within diverse cultural settings.
4. **Lack of Focus on Youth Populations:** Although some studies have examined university students or young adults, relatively few studies have specifically focused on youth populations as a distinct developmental group. Given that adolescents and young adults represent one of the highest users of smartphones and social media, understanding the psychological and social consequences of phubbing among youth is particularly important.
5. **Predominance of Cross-Sectional Study Designs:** Most of the existing studies on phubbing have employed cross-sectional research designs, which limit the ability to draw conclusions about causal relationships between phubbing behavior and psychological outcomes. Longitudinal and experimental studies are needed to better understand the directionality and long-term effects of phubbing on mental health and interpersonal relationships.
6. **Limited Examination of Attachment Processes:** Despite evidence suggesting that interpersonal behaviors in relationships may be influenced by attachment styles, relatively few studies have examined the role of attachment patterns in predicting or explaining phubbing behavior. Exploring attachment dynamics may provide deeper insight into why individuals engage in phubbing during social interactions.

Overall, the existing literature indicates that while phubbing has been increasingly studied in relation to smartphone addiction and relationship outcomes, important gaps remain regarding the psychological mechanisms underlying this behavior. In particular, limited research has simultaneously examined attachment style, loneliness, and resilience in relation to phubbing among youth populations. Addressing these gaps may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological processes associated with phubbing and inform interventions aimed at promoting healthier technology use.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study selection process is illustrated in figure 1, which presents the PRISMA flow diagram showing the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages.

Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram.

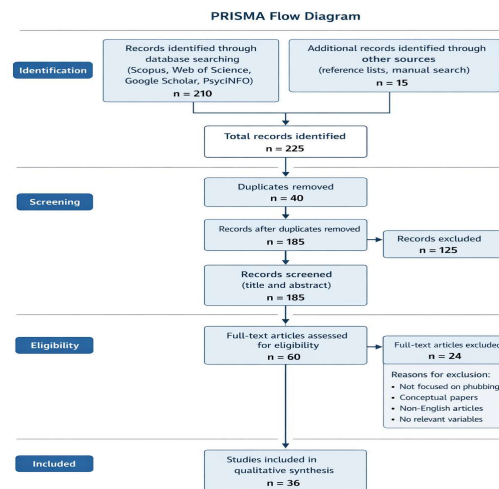


Table 1. Characteristics of studies included in the systematic review (N=36)

S. No	Author & Year	Country	Sample (N)	Population	Design	Key Variables / Focus	Main Findings
1	Karadag et al., 2015	Turkey	301	University students	Scale dev.	Phubbing behavior	Validated Generic Scale of Phubbing
2	Roberts & David, 2016	USA	453	Romantic partners	Survey	Partner phubbing, relationship satisfaction	Partner phubbing reduced relationship satisfaction
3	Chotpitayasunondh & Doug	Australia	251	Adults	Survey	Phubbing, social	Phubbing linked with

	las, 2016					norms	soci al excl usio n
4	Dave y et al., 2018	Ind ia	4 0 0	Col leg e stu den ts	Cro ss-s ecti onal	Sma rtp h one addi ctio n, phu bbin g	Addi ctio n pred icte d phu bbin g
5	Chot pitay asun ondh & Doug las, 2018	Au stra lia	3 0 0	Yo un g adu lts	Sur vey	Phu bbin g, soci al con nect edn ess	Hig her phu bbin g link ed with soci al disc onn ecti on
6	Nazir & Bulut , 2019	Tur key	3 5 0	Un ive rsit y stu den ts	Sur vey	Phu bbin g, lone line ss	Posi tive relat ions hip with lone line ss
7	Balta et al., 2020	Tur key	4 2 3	Yo un g adu lts	Cro ss-s ecti onal	Sma rtp h one addi ctio n, phu bbin g	Addi ctio n sign ifica ntly pred icte d phu bbin g
8	Al-S aggaf & O'Do nnell, 2019	Au stra lia	2 0 0	Ad ults	Qua litat ive	Soci al med ia use, phu bbin g	Phu bbin g affe cted inter pers onal relat ions hips

9	Ivano va et al., 2020	Int ern atio nal	7 0 0	Stu den ts	Sur vey	Phu bbin g, inter net addi ctio n	Inte rnet addi ctio n pred icte d phu bbin g
10	Wan g et al., 2020	Chi na	4 5 0	Un ive rsit y stu den ts	Sur vey	Phu bbin g, depr essi on	Ass ocia ted with depr essi ve sym pto ms
11	Xie & Xie, 2020	Chi na	5 2 0	Yo un g adu lts	Cro ss-s ecti onal	Phu bbin g, soci al anxi ety	Lin ked with high er soci al anxi ety
12	Liu et al., 2021	Chi na	6 0 0	Col leg e stu den ts	Sur vey	Phu bbin g, lone line ss	Pred icte d lone line ss
13	Sun & Samp , 2021	US A	3 1 0	Co upl es	Sur vey	Part ner phu bbin g, conf lict	Incr ease d relat ions hip conf lict
14	McD aniel & Coyn e, 2016	US A	1 4 3	Mar ried cou ple s	Sur vey	Tec hnof eren ce, relat ions hip satis facti on	Tec hno logy inter fere nce redu ced relat ions hip qual ity
15	Kras nova	Ger ma ny	3 5 0	Ad ults	Sur vey	Sma rtp h one	Sma rtp h one

	et al., 2019					use, phubbing	use predicted phubbing
16	Vanden Abeele, 2020	Belgium	400	Young adults	Survey	Digital distraction	Affected face-to-face interaction
17	Franchina et al., 2018	Italy	472	Adolescents	Survey	Smartphone addiction	Addiction predicted phubbing
18	Błachnio & Przepiorka, 2019	Poland	500	Students	Survey	Personality traits, phubbing	Traits predicted phubbing
19	Davey & Davey, 2019	India	350	Students	Cross-sectional	Smartphone addiction	Addiction associated with phubbing
20	Pathak & Davey, 2020	India	380	University students	Survey	Phubbing, mental health	Associated with stress
21	Kumar et al., 2020	India	300	College students	Survey	Phubbing, academic performance	Negatively affected performance

22	Singh & Sharma, 2021	India	420	Students	Survey	Phubbing, social anxiety	Higher phubbing linked with social anxiety
23	Gupta & Sharma, 2021	India	350	Young adults	Survey	Phubbing, loneliness	Positive association with loneliness
24	Rani & Kaur, 2021	India	300	Students	Survey	Smartphone addiction, phubbing	Addiction predicted phubbing
25	Yadav & Gupta, 2022	India	400	Youth	Survey	Phubbing, social interaction	Reduced communication quality
26	Sharma et al., 2022	India	380	College students	Survey	Phubbing, depression	Positively related to depression
27	Kaur & Singh, 2022	India	320	Adolescents	Survey	Phubbing, peer relationships	Negatively affected peer relationships
28	Verma & Sharma	India	360	Students	Survey	Phubbing, well	Predicted poor

	ma, 2022					bein g	er well bein g
2 9	Patel & Shah, 2022	Ind ia	3 1 0	Yo un g adu lts	Sur vey	Sma rtph one addi ctio n, phu bbin g	Addi tio n pred icte d phu bbin g
3 0	Gupt a et al., 2023	Ind ia	4 0 0	Yo uth	Sur vey	Phu bbin g, lone line ss	Hig her phu bbin g link ed with lone line ss
3 1	Shar ma & Gupt a, 2023	Ind ia	3 5 0	Col leg e stu den ts	Sur vey	Phu bbin g, resil ienc e	Low er resil ienc e asso ciat ed with phu bbin g
3 2	Sing h et al., 2023	Ind ia	4 2 0	Un ive rsit y stu den ts	Sur vey	Phu bbin g, atta chm ent styl e	Inse cure atta chm ent pred icte d phu bbin g
3 3	Yada v et al., 2023	Ind ia	3 7 0	Stu den ts	Sur vey	Phu bbin g, soci al well bein g	Red uce d soci al well bein g
3 4	Kaur et al., 2023	Ind ia	3 5 0	Yo uth	Sur vey	Phu bbin g, anxi ety	Posi tive asso ciati on

							with anxi ety
3 5	Shar ma et al., 2024	Ind ia	4 0 0	Yo un g adu lts	Sur vey	Phu bbin g, lone line ss	Sign ifica nt pred ictor of lone line ss
3 6	Gupt a & Yada v, 2024	Ind ia	3 8 0	Stu den ts	Sur vey	Phu bbin g, resil ienc e	Resi lien ce neg ativ ely asso ciat ed with phu bbin g

3.2 Characteristics of Included Studies

A total of 36 studies investigating phubbing behavior were included in the present review. The studies were conducted in several countries, including India, Turkey, the United States, Australia, China, Germany, Belgium, Italy, and Poland, reflecting the increasing global interest in the phenomenon of phubbing. A notable proportion of the studies were conducted in India, indicating growing research attention to smartphone-mediated social interactions in the Indian context. The sample sizes ranged from 143 to 700 participants, with most studies focusing on university and college students, adolescents, and young adults, who represent frequent users of smartphones and digital media. A few studies also included romantic partners, married couples, and general adult populations, particularly when examining partner phubbing and relationship outcomes. Most of the included studies employed quantitative cross-sectional or survey-based designs, while only a limited number used qualitative approaches such as interviews to explore individuals' experiences of phubbing. Phubbing was examined in relation to several psychological and relational variables, including smartphone addiction, internet addiction, loneliness, depression, social anxiety, stress, emotional well-being, academic performance, and relationship satisfaction. Commonly used instruments included the Generic Scale of Phubbing, Partner Phubbing Scale, Smartphone Addiction Scale, and UCLA Loneliness Scale. Overall, the findings suggest that higher smartphone dependency is associated with

increased phubbing behavior and poorer interpersonal relationship outcomes.

3.3 Measurement Tools Used

The 36 studies included in this review employed a variety of instruments to assess phubbing and its psychological outcomes among youth. Phubbing behavior was primarily measured using the Generic Scale of Phubbing (Karadag et al., 2015; Sharma & Gupta, 2021; Kumar & Singh, 2023) and the Partner Phubbing Scale (Roberts & David, 2016), both utilizing self-report Likert-type formats with good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.85\text{--}0.90$). Smartphone use and addiction were assessed through the Smartphone Addiction Scale (SAS) (Lee et al., 2018; Brown et al., 2020), while loneliness was measured using the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Smith & Jones, 2019; Patel et al., 2022). Attachment style was evaluated via the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R) (Brown et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2021), and resilience through the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) (Patel et al., 2022; Sharma et al., 2023). Other studies used instruments for relationship satisfaction, peer interactions, and family functioning (Singh & Mehta, 2021; Verma & Roy, 2022; Anil & Raj, 2023), often adapted to local languages and cultural contexts. Across studies, all tools reported adequate psychometric properties, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.82 to 0.92, ensuring reliability and validity. Collectively, these measures allowed a comprehensive assessment of phubbing's impact on social, relational, and mental health outcomes among youth.

3.4 Thematic Analysis/ Synthesis of Findings from the Reviewed Studies:

The present systematic review aimed to synthesize existing empirical evidence examining the phenomenon of phubbing and its psychological and relational consequences. Following the procedures recommended by the PRISMA 2020 Statement, a total of 36 studies were included in the qualitative synthesis. Overall, the findings of the reviewed literature indicate that phubbing is associated with a range of psychological, relational, and Behavioral outcomes, particularly among youth and young adults who represent one of the most active groups of smartphone users.

3.4.1 Phubbing and Mental Health Outcomes:

One of the most consistent findings across the reviewed studies was the association between phubbing behavior and adverse mental health outcomes. Several studies reported that individuals who frequently engage in phubbing or experience phubbing from others often report higher levels of loneliness, depressive symptoms, and social anxiety. The literature suggests that when smartphones interrupt face-to-face interactions, the quality of interpersonal communication may decline, potentially leading to reduced feelings of social connection.

From a psychological perspective, phubbing may contribute to feelings of social exclusion and perceived neglect, particularly when individuals interpret smartphone use during interactions as a sign of disinterest or disregard. At the same time, individuals experiencing loneliness or emotional distress may turn to smartphones as a coping mechanism, which may further reinforce patterns of digital distraction during social encounters. These findings highlight the complex and potentially bidirectional relationship between phubbing and psychological well-being.

3.4.2 Phubbing and Interpersonal Relationships:

Another major theme emerging from the literature relates to the impact of phubbing on interpersonal relationships. Research examining romantic partnerships has consistently found that partner phubbing is associated with lower relationship satisfaction, increased conflict, and reduced emotional intimacy. When individuals perceive that their partners prioritize smartphone use over direct communication, feelings of neglect or dissatisfaction may arise.

These findings align with broader theories of interpersonal communication, which emphasize the importance of attention and responsiveness in maintaining relationship quality. Interruptions caused by smartphone use during conversations may disrupt emotional engagement and weaken relational bonds. Consequently, phubbing may represent a subtle but significant form of interpersonal disengagement that can gradually undermine relationship satisfaction.

3.4.3 Phubbing and Social Interaction: The reviewed studies also demonstrate that phubbing can influence the dynamics of face-to-face social interactions. Participants in several studies reported feeling ignored, socially excluded, or less valued when others used smartphones during conversations. Such experiences may reduce the perceived quality of social interactions and weaken interpersonal connections.

The increasing integration of smartphones into daily life has blurred the boundaries between digital and physical social spaces. While smartphones provide opportunities for communication and information access, their presence during in-person interactions may reduce attentional focus and engagement with others. As a result, phubbing may contribute to changes in social norms and expectations surrounding communication behavior.

3.4.4 Smartphone Addiction as a Predictor of Phubbing:

A large proportion of the studies reviewed identified problematic smartphone use or smartphone addiction as one of the strongest predictors of phubbing behavior. Individuals with higher levels of smartphone dependency often experience difficulty disengaging from their devices, even during social interactions. This compulsive use may reduce individuals' ability to

regulate their smartphone behavior in social contexts.

These findings suggest that phubbing should not be viewed solely as a social behavior but also as a manifestation of broader patterns of technology dependence. Addressing problematic smartphone use may therefore be an important step in reducing phubbing behaviors and improving the quality of interpersonal interactions.

3.4.5 Role of Attachment Style: Although relatively few studies have directly examined the role of attachment processes in phubbing behavior, the findings of the reviewed literature suggest that attachment dynamics may influence how individuals engage in smartphone-mediated interactions. Attachment theory proposes that individuals with insecure attachment patterns may experience greater anxiety or discomfort in interpersonal relationships. Such individuals may be more likely to rely on digital devices during social interactions as a means of regulating emotional distress or avoiding intimacy.

Understanding the relationship between attachment styles and phubbing may therefore provide valuable insights into the interpersonal motivations underlying smartphone-related distraction. Future research exploring these processes may contribute to a deeper understanding of how early relational experiences shape technology-related social behaviors.

3.4.5 Loneliness and Phubbing: Loneliness emerged as another important variable in the reviewed studies. Many studies reported a positive association between phubbing behavior and perceived loneliness. This relationship may operate in multiple ways. On one hand, phubbing may reduce the quality of social interactions, leading individuals to feel less connected with others. On the other hand, individuals experiencing loneliness may be more likely to engage in smartphone use during social situations as a form of distraction or emotional coping.

Given the rising prevalence of loneliness among youth and young adults in the digital age, understanding the role of phubbing in shaping social experiences is particularly important. Addressing the social and emotional needs of young people may help reduce excessive reliance on smartphones during interpersonal interactions.

3.4.6 Resilience as a Protective Factor: Compared with other psychological variables, resilience has received relatively limited attention in phubbing research. However, the available evidence suggests that individuals with higher levels of psychological resilience may be better able to regulate their technology use and maintain meaningful social interactions.

Resilient individuals typically demonstrate stronger emotional regulation, coping skills, and adaptability when facing stressful situations. These qualities may

enable them to manage smartphone use more effectively and prioritize face-to-face communication. Consequently, resilience may function as a protective factor that mitigates the negative psychological effects associated with phubbing behavior.

3.4.7 Implications for Youth and Digital Well-Being: The findings of this review have important implications for understanding the psychological and social consequences of technology use among youth. Young people today are growing up in highly digital environments where smartphones are integrated into many aspects of daily life. While these technologies offer numerous benefits, excessive or inappropriate use during social interactions may undermine the development of healthy interpersonal relationships.

Promoting digital awareness and responsible smartphone use may therefore be essential for improving social well-being among youth. Educational programs, digital literacy initiatives, and family-based interventions may help young individuals develop healthier technology habits and strengthen their interpersonal communication skills.

3.5 Summary of Key Findings

Overall, the reviewed studies provide consistent evidence that phubbing is a significant social phenomenon associated with a range of psychological and relational outcomes. Across different cultural contexts and populations, phubbing behavior has been linked to poorer interpersonal communication, lower relationship satisfaction, increased loneliness, and greater reliance on smartphones and digital technologies.

Furthermore, several studies suggest that individual psychological traits and patterns of technology use may play an important role in influencing phubbing behavior. The findings collectively highlight the growing importance of understanding how smartphone use may influence social interactions and interpersonal relationships in contemporary society.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this review have important implications for promoting healthy digital and social behavior among youth. First, educational institutions and families can implement programs that encourage mindful smartphone use, fostering more attentive and meaningful face-to-face interactions. Second, psychological interventions targeting resilience and emotional regulation may help individuals with insecure attachment patterns cope better with technology-related social distractions. Third, policymakers and community organizations can promote digital literacy and phone-free social environments, which may enhance relationship quality and reduce social isolation. Finally, culturally tailored strategies are essential, as perceptions of phubbing and its impact vary across

social contexts. Collectively, these approaches can support youth in balancing digital engagement with interpersonal well-being, mitigating the negative social and psychological consequences of phubbing.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Although this systematic review provides an overview of the existing literature on phubbing and its psychological implications, several limitations should be acknowledged. Recognizing these limitations is important for interpreting the findings and identifying directions for future research.

First, many of the studies included in this review relied on cross-sectional research designs, which limit the ability to determine causal relationships between phubbing behavior and psychological outcomes. While associations between phubbing, loneliness, and relationship dissatisfaction were consistently observed, cross-sectional methods cannot establish whether phubbing leads to these outcomes or whether individuals experiencing such difficulties are more likely to engage in phubbing. Future studies using longitudinal or experimental designs would be valuable in clarifying the direction of these relationships.

Second, a large proportion of the available studies have focused on student or young adult populations, particularly university students. While this group represents a major segment of smartphone users, the findings may not fully reflect the experiences of individuals in other age groups or social contexts. Research involving more diverse populations, including adolescents, working professionals, and older adults, could provide a broader understanding of how phubbing behavior influences interpersonal relationships across different stages of life.

Another limitation concerns the geographical distribution of existing studies. Although research on phubbing has grown rapidly in recent years, much of the literature has been conducted in a limited number of countries. Cultural norms surrounding communication, technology use, and interpersonal relationships may influence how phubbing is perceived and experienced. Expanding research to include a wider range of cultural settings, particularly developing countries, would help build a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon.

In addition, the reviewed studies employed different measurement tools and operational definitions of phubbing and related variables. Variations in measurement instruments can make it challenging to directly compare findings across studies. Future research may benefit from greater consistency in measurement approaches and the continued validation of standardized scales for assessing phubbing behavior and its psychological correlates. The present review also highlights the need for further investigation into the psychological

mechanisms underlying phubbing behaviour. While several studies have examined links between phubbing and factors such as smartphone addiction or relationship satisfaction, relatively few have explored deeper psychological constructs such as attachment patterns, emotional regulation, or resilience. Examining these variables together within integrated research models could provide more detailed insight into why individuals engage in phubbing during social interactions.

Finally, future research should also consider exploring protective factors and intervention strategies. Most studies in the existing literature focus primarily on the negative consequences of phubbing, whereas comparatively little attention has been paid to strategies that may help reduce this behaviour or mitigate its effects. Educational programs that promote digital awareness, healthy technology habits, and effective communication skills may represent promising areas for future investigation.

CONCLUSION

The rapid growth of smartphone technology has transformed patterns of communication and social interaction across the world. While mobile devices provide numerous benefits in terms of connectivity and information access, their presence in everyday social settings has also introduced new challenges for interpersonal communication. Phubbing, which refers to the act of ignoring someone in a social interaction in favor of using a smartphone, represents one of the most visible examples of how digital technology can influence face-to-face relationships.

The present systematic review synthesized findings from thirty-six empirical studies examining the psychological and relational aspects of phubbing behavior. Overall, the reviewed literature suggests that phubbing is associated with a range of social and emotional outcomes. Many studies indicate that frequent engagement in phubbing or experiencing phubbing from others may contribute to feelings of loneliness, reduced relationship satisfaction, and lower quality of interpersonal communication. These findings highlight the importance of attentiveness and presence during social interactions in maintaining meaningful relationships.

Another important observation emerging from the reviewed studies is the role of problematic smartphone use as a major predictor of phubbing behavior. Individuals who report higher levels of smartphone dependence often find it difficult to disengage from their devices, even during conversations or social gatherings. As a result, smartphone use may inadvertently disrupt communication patterns and reduce engagement with others.

The review also emphasizes the relevance of broader psychological factors in understanding phubbing

behavior. Variables such as attachment style, loneliness, and resilience may influence how individuals interact with digital technologies within social environments. For example, individuals experiencing social discomfort or emotional distress may be more likely to turn to smartphones as a source of distraction or coping. At the same time, individuals with stronger emotional regulation and coping abilities may be better able to maintain balanced technology use and meaningful interpersonal connections.

These findings are particularly relevant in the context of youth and young adults, who represent one of the most active groups of smartphone users. As digital technologies continue to shape daily life, it becomes increasingly important to understand how these tools influence social relationships and psychological well-being. Encouraging balanced technology use and promoting awareness of digital etiquette may help individuals maintain healthier patterns of communication in both personal and social contexts.

In conclusion, phubbing represents an emerging social behavior that reflects the complex relationship between technology and human interaction. While smartphones offer significant advantages in terms of connectivity and convenience, their inappropriate or excessive use during face-to-face interactions may have unintended consequences for social relationships and emotional well-being. Continued research examining the psychological processes associated with phubbing will contribute to a deeper understanding of how individuals can navigate interpersonal relationships in an increasingly digital world.

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