



Phubbing, partner phubbing and relationship satisfaction among couples

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Abstract

This research is on Phubbing, Partner Phubbing and Relationship Satisfaction among Couples. The sample of the study included Married Couples (n=22) and Romantic couples (n=39). The tools used are Phubbing scale, The Partner Phubbing scale and Relationship Assessment Scale. The major findings of this study are, there is a moderate level of Phubbing, Partner Phubbing and Relationship satisfaction among married and romantic couples. There is positive significant correlation between Phubbing, Partner Phubbing and Relationship satisfaction.

Keywords: phubbing, partner phubbing, relationship satisfaction, married and romantic couples

1. Introduction

Pulling out a smartphone often from your pocket or purse may end a relationship quicker than any other way. You seem to undermine your relationship with your loved ones by being glued to your phone. Over the years, many studies have been done on the usage of mobile phones and relationships. Some research suggests that smartphones have a positive influence because they make the people happy by being able to connect especially when they are in a long-distance relationship. But few other investigations reveal the darker sides of the mobile phones, where smartphones become a hurdle in the real-life interaction or face to face interaction when a person pulls out his phones often in the middle of a conversation, which distracts the other person. The abuse of smart phones has placed people at the risk of impaired social interactions. When it comes to smartphones, tablets and other mobile delights, many of the adults have the unfortunate tendency to behave like children: prodding and poling their shiny toys to the exclusion of anyone and anything else. People would rather communicate via text instead of talking face-to-face. (Ugar & Koc, 2015) The device shortens the virtual distance among people but despite their obvious advantages smartphones may sometimes create gaps between people and pull them apart (Turkle, 2012). This gadget is becoming so important in an individual's life that people end up ignoring others with whom they are sharing physical space or having a face-to-face conversation. This phenomenon, Phubbing is becoming an acceptable norm in everyday communication (Chotpitayasunondh, 2016) [4].

Phubbing – The practice of ignoring one's companion or companions or order to pay attention to one's phone or other mobile devices (Oxford English Dictionary). Whenever we use phones, we are connecting with someone on social media. Sometimes we go through the old photos uploaded in the networking sites and cherish the moment we had in the past, but we are not being aware that by cherishing the past by looking into our phones, we are disrupting the present relationship spending with your beloved. During face-to-face conversations, individuals generally expect their conversational partners to meet them with attentiveness and psychological availability (Burgoon & Hale, 1987).

Smartphone use during such conversations may signal inattentiveness and psychological distance; thereby disrupting the communication quality (Miller-Ott & Kelly, 2015; Vanden Abeele, Antheunis, & Schouten, 2016; Vanden Abeele & Postma-Nilsenova, 2018), reducing the sense of emotional connection (Nakamura, 2015), and undermining perceptions of empathetic concern, closeness, interpersonal trust, and the quality of conversation (Misra, Cheng, Genevie, & Yuan, 2014; Przybylski & Weinstein, 2013)

Partner phubbing is the extent to which your romantic partner or spouse uses or is distracted by his/her cell phone while in your company (Roberts and David 2016). Many research has examined the potential negative effect of partner phubbing on relationship satisfaction recently (Halpern and Katz 2017; Roberts and David 2016; Wangetal. 2017) [16]. Two theories which explain the negative effect. The first theory is the displacement hypothesis that can be used to explain the detrimental effects of media use on relationship satisfaction (Valkenburg and Peter 2007). For instance, Krautetal. (1998) argued that by using the Internet, people are substituting poorer quality social relationships for better relationships, that is, substituting weak ties for strong ones. The second theory is the symbolic interactionism theory that is also useful to understand this question (Halpern and Katz 2017). This theory assumes that individuals interactively use symbols to develop a sense of themselves, their roles, and their relationship with others (Denzin 1992; Halpern and Katz 2017; Stryker 1999)

Relationship satisfaction has been described as a personal assessment of an individual's contentment, pleasure, and preference acquired from his/her association (Hawkins, 1968) People who are discontented with their associations are expected to recompense for emotive and communal sustenance through online and digital world. Valenzuela *et al.* (2014) Individuals that feel contentment with their associations supposed to have the greater amount of reliance and they are categorically inclined towards their significant others for the contentment of their basic wants (Rusbult, C. E., & Buunk, B. P., 1993). People who are discontented with their associations are expected to recompense for

emotive and communal sustenance through online and digital world. Valenzuela *et al.* (2014)

Xingchao Wang, Fengqing Zha Li Lei (2019) investigated the moderating effects of self-esteem and marital status on the association between partner phubbing and relationship satisfaction. The findings revealed that partner phubbing was not significantly associated with relationship satisfaction. The association between partner phubbing and relationship satisfaction was also moderated by marital status, which showed that the significant relation between partner phubbing and relationship satisfaction only existed among married adults.

Brandon T. Mc Daniel, Michelle Drouin (2019) [12], suggests that regardless of an individual's or a couple's current level of well-being, if individuals perceive technology use as interfering in their interactions with their partner, these perceptions may affect their daily assessments of their relationship and mood.

Engin Karadağ, Şule Betül Tosuntaş, Evren Erzen, Pinar Duru, Nalan Bostan, Berrak Mizrak Şahin1, Ilkay Çulhaand, Burcu Babadağ (2015) conducted a study, findings show that the highest correlation value explaining phubbing is a mobile phone addiction, the other correlation values reflect a dependency on the phone.

Chotpitayasonondh, Varoth and Douglas, Karen (2018) [5]. study revealed that increased phubbing significantly and negatively affected perceived communication quality and relationship satisfaction. These effects were mediated by reduced feelings of belongingness and both positive and negative affect.

Meredith E. David And James A. Roberts (2017) [13, 14] summarised that individuals' use of cell phones in the presence of others may have harmful effects on the well-being of those around them.

James A. Roberts, Meredith E. David (2015) conducted a study on Partner phubbing and relationship satisfaction among romantic partners Pphubbing was found to indirectly impact depression through relationship satisfaction and ultimately life satisfaction. Given the ever-increasing use of cell phones to communicate between romantic partners, the research offers insight into the process by which such use may impact relationship satisfaction and personal wellbeing

1.1. Focus if the study

In this 21st century, technology has advanced a lot that people can't imagine a life without it. Mobile phones have become so common that each and every individual owns one indiscriminately of age group. As people becoming more connected to their phones, they are becoming disconnected from their real life which causes a lot of hurdles in their relationship. Intimacy is an importance factor in a relationship but now a days people are more intimate to their phones than their partners. This study focus on the relation between phubbing, Partner Phubbing and relationship satisfaction.

2. Methodology

This is a non-experimental within group descriptive research design with a quantitative approach.

2.1 Objectives

1. To assess the level of Phubbing, Partner Phubbing and relationship satisfaction between married and romantic

couples.

2. To find the relationship between Phubbing, Partner Phubbing and relationship satisfaction between married and romantic couples.
3. To find the influence of Phubbing, Partner Phubbing on relationship satisfaction.
4. To find the difference between married and romantic couples.

2.2 Hypothesis

H1: There is no correlation between variables- phubbing, partner phubbing and relationship satisfaction

H2: There is no significant influence of Phubbing and Partner Phubbing on Relationship satisfaction

H3: There is no statistically significant differences regarding the level of phubbing, partner phubbing and relationship satisfaction among married couples and romantic couples

2.3 Operational definition of the variable

“Phubbing” is an act of looking very often into the mobile phone while spending time with others or in between a face to face conversation.

“Partner Phubbing” is an act where a partner is distracted in his phone without spending quality time with his/ her lover/spouse.

“Relationship satisfaction” is a personal feeling or assessment of how happy he/she is with his/her lover/spouse.

2.4 Demographic Variables

The demographic variables of the study include age, gender, Relationship status

2.4 Samples and sampling techniques

This study uses non-probability sampling method with purposive sampling technique where individuals are either married or in a romantic relationship. For the purposes of the current study, only married men and woman (n=39) and romantic couples (n=22) were included in the analyses. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 50

2.5 Inclusion criteria

- Married individuals and Romantic couples
- Aged between 18-50

Exclusion criteria

- Divorced individuals, widower, widows

2.6 Tools used

The Phubbing Scale: The Phubbing Scale is a scale developed to measure the phubbing tendency of individuals. The scale is a total of 10 items with two factors. The factors are Communication disorder (five items; $\alpha=.87$) and Cell Phone Passion (five items; $\alpha=.85$). The scale is a 5 -point Likert type ranging between Never (1) and Always (5). The lowest and highest scores that can be obtained from the scale are between 10 and 50. The score of 40 and above indicates phubbing addiction of individuals (Karadağ, *et al.*, 2015). The Partner Phubbing Scale investigates the extension of the smartphone usage when someone is in company of his/her own partner. It consists of nine items, graded from “Never” to “Sometimes” to “All of the time” with a reliability of 0.93.

The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) is a brief measure of global relationship satisfaction. It consists of seven items, Each rated on a five-point Likert scale. It is suitable for use with any individuals who are in an intimate relationship, such

as married couples, cohabiting couples, engaged couples, or dating couples

2.4 Procedure

The data was collected through Google form then analysed through SPSS

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Descriptive of the variables- Phubbing, Partner Phubbing and Relationship satisfaction

Variables	N	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Phubbing	61	26.557	.9234	7.2123
Partner Phubbing	61	23.705	.9389	7.3334
Relationship satisfaction	61	25.44	.455	3.552

The group as a whole has scored a mean score of 26.557 in Phubbing, 23.705 in Partner Phubbing and 25.44 in Relationship satisfaction which can be interpret as the group has a moderate level of Phubbing tendencies, Partner Phubbing and Relationship satisfaction. It was also found that phubbing It behaviour has become a common norm in today's society and it seems not to be fully aware of all the effects on intimacy of disturbance and conversation, both positive

and negative (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016 [4]; Abeele *et al.*, 2019). (Robert & David, 2016; Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018 [5]; Al-sagaf *et al.*, 2018; Wang *et al.*, 2019) mention that phubbing can affect the quality of partner relationships and the quality of communication which creates conflict between partners due to smartphone usage. The quality of relationship satisfaction that is not good can cause depression for married couples (Wang *et al.*, 2017) [16].

Table 2: Correlation between Phubbing, Partner Phubbing and Relationship satisfaction

		Phubbing	Partner phubbing	Relationship Satisfaction
Phubbing	Pearson Correlation	1	.311*	-.278*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.015	.030
	N	61	61	61
Partner phubbing	Pearson Correlation	.311*	1	-.341**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015		.007
	N	61	61	61
Relationship satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	-.278*	-.341**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.030	.007	
	N	61	61	61

Pearson Correlation showed that there is positive correlation between Phubbing and Partner phubbing (.311), which suggest that as Phubbing increases the Partner phubbing also increases. There is a negative correlation between Phubbing and Relationship Satisfaction (-.278), which reveals that as the Phubbing increases the individual's Relationship satisfaction diminishes. Likely Partner phubbing also has a negative correlation with relationship satisfaction. Thus it rejects the null hypothesis 1 which states that there is no correlation between variables- phubbing, partner phubbing and relationship satisfaction. Partner phubbing was negatively correlated with

relationship satisfaction and this relation was moderated by relationship length (Wang *et al.* 2017) [16]. As the partner indulge himself more into his cell phone, the relation satisfaction decreases. Roberts and David's (2016) study also indicated that partner phubbing was negatively associated with relationship satisfaction. With the ever-increasing presence and use of cell phones, the boundaries that separate other interests and partner relationships have become increasingly "blurred"(Chesley, 2005; Leggett & Rossouw, 2014). Using smart phones for face-to-face Communication might reduce conversation quality over the phone (Wang, Xie, Wang, Wang & Lei, 2017) [16].

Table 3: Regression analysis summary of Phubbing and Partner Phubbing predicting Relationship satisfaction

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	F	Df	R Square	Adjusted R Square	95.0% Confidence Interval For B	
(Constant)	31.172	1.893		5.085		.149	.120	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Phubbing	-.094	.063	-.191		2			27.383	34.961
Partner Phubbing	-.136	.062	-.282		58			-.220	.032
Total					60			-.260	-.013

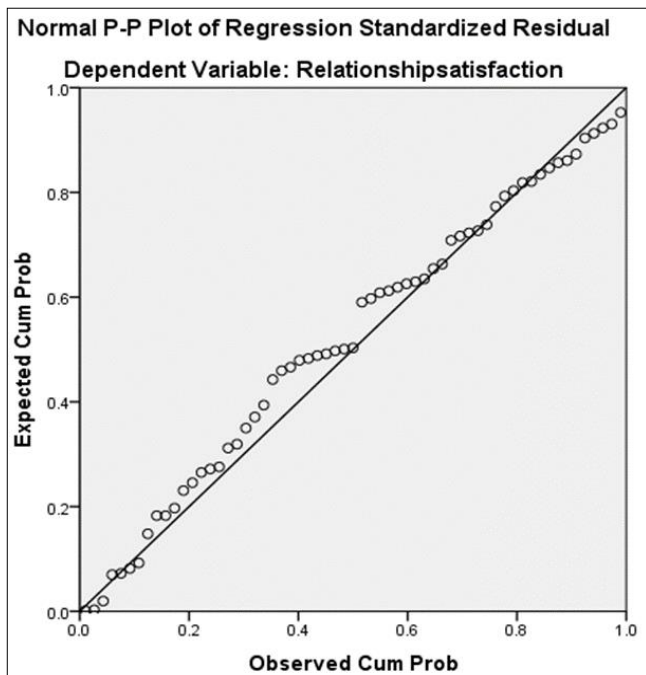


Fig 1

The prediction model is statistically significant, $F(2, 58) = 5.085, p < .009$ and accounted for approximately 14% of the variance of Relationship Satisfaction ($R^2 = .149$, adjusted $R^2 = .120$). While Phubbing contributed ($B = -.094, p = .140$) and the contribution of Partner Phubbing was ($B = -.136, p = .031$) this suggests that Partner phubbing has higher impact on Relationship satisfaction than Phubbing. Though there is low R^2 , still it shows a slight influence of Phubbing and Partner Phubbing on Relationship Satisfaction.

Partner phubbing significantly predicted relationship satisfaction. Cell phone conflict mediated the relationship between partner phubbing and relationship satisfaction (Roberts and David, 2016). (Hall *et al.* 2014) found that individuals' perceptions of their partner's non-adherence to societal norms with regard to co-present phone use were not significantly correlated with their relational quality. Finally, some studies indicated that the relation between partner phubbing and relationship satisfaction was fairly complex and this relation was mediated or moderated by other variables. For instance, Halpern and Katz (2017) found that the relation between partner phubbing and perceived relationship quality among romantic partners was not significant direct, and this relation was fully mediated by phone related conflicts and lack of intimacy

Table 4: Difference between married and Romantic couples

Variables	Romantic Couples Mean ± Sd	Married Couples Mean ± Sd	t-test	Sig.(2-tailed) (df=30)
Phubbing	27.641±6.5834	24.636±8.0092	2.364	.129
Partner Phubbing	23.051±7.4585	24.864±7.1267	.000	.982
Relationship Satisfaction	25.10±3.858	26.05±2.919	-2.674	.106

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare Phubbing, Partner Phubbing and Relationship Satisfaction among married and romantic couples. The results revealed that there is no significant difference in the scores of Phubbing, Partner Phubbing and relationship satisfaction among married and Romantic couples. Therefore we failed to reject the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between Phubbing, Partner Phubbing and Relationship Satisfaction among Married and Romantic couples. A well-functioning relationship both creates healthy families and happy individuals (Coyne *et al.*, 2011: 150). Therefore, it is significant to understand the current problems that couples are having, and those problems are sometimes directly related to the use of technology in daily lives. The increase in use of cell phones has blurred the relationships. Those partners who were more frequently distracted by their phones, were less satisfied with their relationships, and thus were more likely to feel depressed about it (Roberts & David, 2016, p. 1). Users have become so enamored with their digital universes that they frequently ignore the real universe around them (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016, p. 10) [4].

3.1 Findings

1. The group as a whole have moderate level of Phubbing, Partner Phubbing and Relation Satisfaction
2. There is significant relationship between Phubbing, Partner Phubbing and Relation Satisfaction
3. Phubbing and Partner Phubbing predicted approximately 14% of the variance of Relationship Satisfaction

4. There is no difference between phubbing and partner phubbing

3.2 Limitations

A larger sample size may have provided different or more important results. Indeed, the analysis has shown some significant results that support current study, even with a small sample size. Another drawback to this analysis was the unequal ratio between married couples and unmarried partners. A bigger sample size will give a more equal proportion. Adding additional variables can give more insight into the determinants of couples' relationship satisfaction

4. Conclusion

In summary, the current study investigates the relationship between Phubbing, Partner phubbing and relationship satisfaction among married and romantic couples. Phubbing is extremely worrying for the growth and development of the generation. This behaviour makes the people unable to grow their ability in real life. Phubbing is caused by overuse of smartphones and access to information through search engines or social media. In actual social settings, a lack of interpersonal interaction with other people will limit the ability to develop relations and communicate well. Guidance and therapy services are needed to resolve the phubbing behaviour that many people are experiencing. The importance of guidance and counselling services can be incorporated in the form of guidance and advice modules based on mobile use

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