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**RESEARCH PAPER****Exploring the Dark Side of Connectivity: A Review of Phubbing Literature**

<sup>1</sup>Kanwal Shahzadi \*, <sup>2</sup>Nyela Ashraf and <sup>3</sup>Amina Tariq

1. Lecturer, Department of Management Sciences, COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan
2. Lecturer, Department of Business Administration, University of Poonch, Rawalakot, AJK, Pakistan
3. Lecturer, Department of Management Sciences, Air University, Kharian, Punjab, Pakistan

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**\*Corresponding Author**

kanwal\_shahzadi@comsats.edu.pk

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**ABSTRACT**

Phubbing is a behaviour that can be defined as the act of ignoring interlocutors in a social interaction while using a mobile phone (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016). This paper provides a thorough examination of the existing literature, specifically addressing the antecedents and outcomes of phubbing behavior. The current study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the literature review in relation to phubbing behaviour, specifically in the workplace. A thorough examination was carried out on 63 articles from the SSCI database, encompassing the years 2013 to 2024. The results of the comprehensive literature review suggest that there are two different dimensions of a phubbing behavior along with the two categories i.e., antecedents and outcomes. This paper, which draws on a review of research spanning a decade, adds to our knowledge of phubbing behavior in the workplace and stresses the need to address this issue for the sake of interpersonal relationship along with organizational effectiveness and employee performance.

**KEYWORDS**

Antecedents, Connectivity, Employees' Outcomes, Interpersonal Relationship, Literature Review, Mobile Devices, Phubbing

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**Introduction**

The development of personal devices, commonly referred to as smartphones, has greatly enhanced human interactions and broadened the realm of communication technology. Smartphones have gained significant popularity in the professional world in recent times (Roberts & David, 2017). Numerous benefits accrue to the entire world because of the proliferation of smartphones. On the other hand, it appears to have a detrimental impact on individuals' physical and mental health, as well as the quality of their interactions with other people (Lee et al., 2015). There are moments when smartphones bring people together, but there are also instances when they drive them apart (Tonacci et al., 2019; Turkle, 2017). When people are physically interacting with others, it's not uncommon for them to look down at their phones and tune out the conversation (Chatterjee, 2020). When individuals use their mobile phones during social interactions and disregard the people they are talking to, it is known as phubbing (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018). Recent research conducted by Farber (2016) found that the relationship between managers and their staff is badly affected by cell phone use, according to 28% of employers. Over the past ten years, workers have increasingly relied on their cellphones while on the clock to check and respond to emails and create instant messaging with colleagues (Pitichat, 2013). The worker may start to pay less attention to their immediate companion as a result. This practice, known as "phubbing" (PHU), has recently grown popular in the realm of communication (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016; Guazzini et al., 2019).

Phubbing consists of three interdependent parts: the phubber, the phubbee, and the social context in which phubbing occurs (Nazir & Pişkin, 2016). Phubbing is performed by the phubber, whereas the Phubbee is the recipient (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018). The act of phubbing may only be defined as such if there is a social setting in which the recipient is present (Thabassum, 2021). As of *Global*, 2024, there are 4.83 billion smartphone users worldwide, spending an average of 6.5 hours daily on the internet (We are Social, 2019). Smartphone usage in the workplace may be driven by variables such as job demands, gaming interests, or social media engagement (Derks et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2016)(Derks et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2016). Smartphones can disrupt face-to-face communication by causing interruptions during conversations (Geser, 2004). Research recognizes that phubbing has become a prevalent phenomenon in our daily lives (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016). In order to grasp the present status of study on phubbing behavior and its consequences particularly in the workplace, one must analyze the literature review. The review can shed light on the extent to which supervisors engage in phubbing, the consequences of this conduct on employee outcomes, and the reasons that may be driving this behavior by combining previous research.

## Literature Review

### Classifications of Phubbing Behaviour

Phubbing can take on two forms. First, someone's ability to communicate is impaired because they are constantly on the phone while someone else is around. In addition, an unhealthy preoccupation with one's mobile phone is known as a "phone obsession" (Karadağ et al., 2015). The negative consequences of phubbing are evident in various aspects of interpersonal relationships, including impaired communication, decreased relationship satisfaction, and feelings of social exclusion and loneliness (Ivanova et al., 2020). Phubbing can have a detrimental impact on one's overall well-being, leading to feelings of depression, dissatisfaction in relationships, disrespect towards conversation partners, and an increased reliance on smartphones (Nikel et al., 2024).

Supervisor Phubbing behavior at the workplace becomes a multi-disciplinary study focus topic for the researchers including psychological, social, communication, technological, and cultural classifications (Koc & Caliskan, 2023). Among these classifications, psychological and technological research areas are linked with phubbing behavior.

The basic aim of these two classifications is to explore the effects of phubbing behavior on human psychology, triggered by information technology. Indeed, at the beginning of phubbing research end of 2013, researchers generally focus on the effects of problematic technology use on people's mental wellbeing (Best et al., 2014), self-esteem (Sariyska et al., 2014), and similarly other emotions like as anxiety, loneliness, depression and closeness etc. (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2013).

Nevertheless, none of these researchers directly coined the term phubbing but most of the researchers said this phenomenon is problematic or too much use of unnecessary technology use. The phubbing phenomenon was first introduced by McCann in the stop phubbing campaign and endorsed by Macquarie Dictionary of Australia (Internet Archive, 2013). Later this phenomenon was introduced and mentioned in some thesis projects by (Coehoorn, 2014; Ting, 2014). And by this way, phubbing is being published in renowned journals by the researchers formally.

The first renowned study by (Karadağ et al., 2015), focused their study on the determinants of phubbing and (Ugur & Koc, 2015) carried out their research on the effects of

phubbing behavior in classrooms. Further, the phubbing categories are divided into three different groups grounded on their research settings; social studies, educational setting studies, and business studies. Where social studies focus on phubbing concerns related to social relationships like partner phubbing etc.

Roberts and David (2016) conducted the first research in two stages to explore phubbing and relationship gratification among couples. In the first stage of their study, a valid and reliable scale of phubbing was developed. In the second stage, a sequential moderated-mediation model was analyzed on the collected data. The result shows that phubbing has an indirect impact on depression through life satisfaction and relationship satisfaction. Focused on their research, it has been clear that phubbing has negative effects on relationship satisfaction.

Similarly, in other research, it was proved that phubbing harms the parenting quality (McDaniel & Drouin, 2019) and phubbing behavior is renowned as a mannered habit of all age groups (Kadylak et al., 2018) as it also has a bad impact on mental health (Bai et al., 2020). In contrast, in a group of all these social studies, there are only a few studies that focus on studying or researching the phubbing impacts in the business framework (Al-Saggaf & O'Donnell, 2019).

## **Materials and Methods**

Systematic literature reviews (SLRs) are effective methods for academics to synthesize current literature and pinpoint key research issues and gaps within a specific discipline (Khanra et al., 2020; Talwar et al., 2020). This study aims to comprehensively review prior research on supervisor's phubbing behavior to identify knowledge gaps and promising areas for future research. The following research questions were designed for this purpose.

Considering the recommendations of (Cooper, 1988) to perform systematic literature reviews, these research questions were used to summarize existing work and pinpoint key topics for future investigation. The current study aimed to review a vast body of literature, focusing on specific citations that emphasize the main topics discussed by scholars thus far.

The current study conducted a thorough review of previous research by utilizing various resources such as Science Direct, JSTOR, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis, Wiley and google scholar. The study employed "conceptual organization." (Cooper, 1988) to arrange the manuscripts.

The present study used a total of four keywords, all of which are interchangeable synonyms for supervisor's phubbing and were therefore chosen for the purpose of a thorough review (Kim & Byrne, 2011). They include supervisor's phubbing, boss phubbing, snubbing, and phubbing. This compilation of articles covers the period from 2013 until 2024. The initial pool comprises 193 scholarly works. The entirely in the title search function yielded just 63 publications where the term "phubbing" was present in the title. After completing the coding of 63 different research articles, two major research topics emerged as being of interest. These encompass the factors that precede phubbing and the consequences that follow. The current analysis highlights the most important knowledge gaps in the historical examples of phubbing.

The existing body of research on phubbing behaviour suggests that there are many factors that contribute to managers engaging in phubbing behaviour. Research conducted over the course of the past decade has yielded significant insights regarding the factors that led up to supervisor's phubbing.

## **Results and discussion**

### **Phubbing at Workplace**

Some research has been carried out to explore the impact of phubbing behavior in the workplace (Cameron & Webster, 2011) but research that specifically emphasizes phubbing behavior in a workplace environment is quite scarce.

In this framework, a term called 'boss phubbing' (Phubbing) was first demarcated by Roberts and David (2017, p.206) as "the extent to which a supervisor uses or is distracted by cell phone while in the presence of subordinates." Similarly, they also focus on the impact of phubbing behavior in the workplace environment and employee engagement, etc. Across all three studies, the main focus of all studies was focus on the impact of phubbing behavior on different aspects and proving it as a bad habit but the research area that found out the basic cause or determinants or antecedents of the phubbing behavior was scarce.

Because finding out the causes of the problem is much more needed and helpful to reduce its causes or impacts. So, the main focus of this study is being carried out on the main cause or antecedents of the boss's phubbing behavior besides its causes to highlight them in a proper way to reduce the impacts and diminish the causes. So, the current study focuses on two main streams; 1. Antecedents of a supervisor's phubbing behavior 2. Outcomes of phubbing behavior.

### **Antecedents of Phubbing Behaviour**

Based on a review of previous research, it appears that several different factors contribute to phubbing behaviour. Most people who responded to academic surveys about phubbing said they had been the victim of the practice at recent social gatherings (Davey et al., 2018; Roberts & David, 2016). Because people typically spend more time with their co-workers than with their friends and family, phubbing in the workplace can be more problematic than phubbing in social settings (Çikrikci et al., 2019; Yasin et al., 2023). According to the research conducted by (Sha et al., 2019), workers spend the equivalent of more than one workday's worth of time (eight hours) each week using their mobile phones while in public.

Some researchers have found some of the predictors or antecedents of phubbing behavior in the business and social context. Firstly, it was found that smartphone or mobile addiction, SMS addiction, internet addiction, social media addiction, and games addiction all are basic and utmost antecedents of phubbing behavior (Karadağ et al., 2015). Multitasking is another critical reason for phubbing (Vorderer et al., 2017).

Individuals may engage in multitasking during shopping, in an educational setting, and in social interactions (Kenyon, 2008). Moreover, it was also found in the same context that internet addiction, browsing addiction, lack of self-control, and fear of missing out leads to mobile phone addiction, and these behaviors, in turn, involve the persons in phubbing behavior (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016). The boredom proneness forecast phubbing behavior (Al-Saggaf & MacCulloch, 2018) but it was not considered as a strong antecedent of phubbing behavior.

Boredom and loneliness are two examples of negative emotions that might contribute to phubbing behaviour (Elhai & Contractor, 2018). Oduor et al. (2016) carried out a qualitative study that hinted between boredom and phubbing behavior (T'ng et al., 2018). Wider personality traits might also predispose the person to phubbing.

The wider personality traits have a strong impact on the individual personality so most of the researchers carried out their research to find out the relationship between personality traits and phubbing behavior. It was discovered that individuals who are more open tend to be less likely to engage in phubbing behaviour. This suggests that being open-minded is associated with a lower likelihood of phubbing (T'ng et al., 2018).

The most major contributors to phubbing behaviour are an individual's unique personality features as well as the circumstances in which the behaviour occurs. The degree of openness an individual exhibits has a significant and inverse association with their phubbing behaviour, while neuroticism (Balta et al., 2020) are positively related to phubbing behaviour. It appears that people's natural curiosity and in-person interactions may better fulfil their desire for stimulation compared to controlled social interactions through mobile phones (T'ng et al., 2018). So, it proves that a restricted and controlled environment is a strong antecedent of phubbing behavior.

Negative emotionality is also a strong antecedent of phubbing behavior. T'ng et al., (2018) explore individuals that having high negative emotionality are probable of involved in phubbing behavior. So it was suggested by the researcher that high negative emotions lead to phubbing behavior that can be controlled to lessen negative emotions (T'ng et al., 2018). The high emotional instability of individuals also makes them more vulnerable to negative responses from face-to-face interactions, which may decoy them to the cloistered, social interactions more controlled, provided by smartphone use (T'ng et al., 2018).

The personality trait neuroticism was also found as a strong antecedent of phubbing behavior via awkward Instagram use (Balta et al., 2020). It was found that individuals high in neuroticism betrothed in awkward Instagram usage and further, this challenging use of Instagram leads to higher echelons of phubbing (Balta et al., 2018).

On the other hand, it was discovered that individuals with a high level of conscientiousness were less likely to develop an addiction to Instagram. This suggests that conscientiousness plays a role in reducing Instagram use (Kircaburun & Griffiths, 2018). It is possible that individuals who are highly conscientious in their exercise habits tend to exhibit self-discipline and therefore use smartphones less frequently.

Agreeableness has the same relationship with phubbing behavior as shown in studies that agreeableness and Instagram addiction have negative relationships so it can't lead to phubbing behavior (Kircaburun & Griffiths, 2018). Maybe because people who are more considerate of others are more aware of how their phone usage affects those around them, leading to a decrease in their phone usage. It has been observed that there is a negative correlation between internet addictions and phubbing behaviour, specifically in relation to the personality traits of agreeableness and conscientiousness.

Because if an individual is not addicted to internet use can't lead to phub (Zhou et al., 2017). There was no positive correlation between agreeableness and conscientiousness and phubbing behaviour, although it was anticipated that these traits would predict phubbing behaviour due to internet, social media, and smartphone addiction (T'ng et al., 2018). It appears that these personality traits do not accurately predict phubbing behaviour.

The broader personality traits like narcissism may also relate to phubbing behavior, whereas narcissism traits relate to low agreeableness (Miller et al., 2011) which further relates to smartphone addiction, internet addiction, and this addiction finally results in phubbing behavior (Kircaburun & Griffiths, 2018; Zhou et al., 2017). So, these two main streams; internet addiction and smartphone addiction lead the phubbing behavior (T'ng et al., 2018).

Furthermore, agreeableness and conscientiousness demonstrate a significant negative correlation with internet addiction (Zhou et al., 2017). Previous studies have also provided evidence pointing to internet addiction (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016; Ting et al., 2018), Excessive use of smartphones (Chatterjee, 2020; Chou & Ting, 2003), Exploring the relationship between excessive self-focus and the addictive nature of social media platforms (Przepiorka et al., 2019), internet addiction (Hussain & Pontes, 2019) are the primary factors that contribute to phubbing behaviour. Personal satisfaction is also a primary motivation for engaging in phubbing. (Ifinedo, 2016).

In line with this, past research has found a relationship between narcissism and excessive Facebook use (Błachnio & Przepiórka, 2018) and another between narcissism and smartphone addiction (Pearson & Hussain, 2017). Individuals who possessed narcissistic traits demonstrated higher levels of problematic social media and smartphone use. However, despite the apparent role of narcissism in the use of technology, research is still absent concerning the role of narcissism in phubbing. It was (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016) found that all personality traits are involved in boosting phubbing behavior and proved strong predictors. So, these areas of personality traits are well captured to highlight the antecedents of phubbing behavior.

A recent survey conducted by the Pew Research Centre has revealed an interesting finding: a staggering 89% of individuals admitted to being distracted by their phones during their most recent social activity (Ranie & Zickuhr, 2015). The findings of the study indicate that people tend to ignore or neglect those who are closely connected to them, as revealed by the research (Al-Saggaf & MacCulloch, 2018). Reciprocity is the underlying reason for this behaviour exhibited by individuals. Engaging in phubbing may lead to the other person adopting a similar behaviour in return (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016). In a study conducted by Kelly et al. (2017), participants discussed the concept of reciprocity and how they would respond to being phubbed. They mentioned that if they were phubbed, they would engage in phubbing themselves as a way to save face. Many individuals now spend a significant portion of their day using smartphones due to an increased dependence on these devices (Roberts & David, 2016), furthermore, the act of reciprocating phubbing, as a means of coping with being phubbed, could potentially lead to the normalization of phubbing in social settings..

So, this behavior is going to be acceptable socially and it becomes a social norm, such as deliberately acceptable phubbing behavior (Vorderer et al., 2017). So, we can say that social acceptability is a strong predictor of phubbing behavior. If a behavior is socially acceptable by all, then it becomes a norm and this norm leads to permanent behavior in a society. Besides these considerations, other forces and predictors are also present in society that boost phubbing behavior. Contextual factors also play a vital role in phubbing behaviour. Reciprocity is one main reason for phubbing behaviour, as phubbing someone may encourage the same behaviour to be reciprocated by the same person (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016). It was hypothesized by Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas. (2018), that employees might imitate their bosses' phubbing behaviour if they were exposed to it first.

### **Outcomes of Phubbing Behaviour**

After reviewing the literature on antecedents of phubbing, many studies have been found that have focused on outcomes of phubbing (Halpern & Katz, 2017; Krasnova et al., 2016; McDaniel & Drouin, 2019; Roberts & David, 2016; Wang et al., 2016). Phubbing can cause damage to a person's personal life and can also have a detrimental impact on the results of their professional endeavours. Outcomes of phubbing in a partner relationship include the

feeling of jealousy (Krasnova et al., 2016), lack of intimacy (Halpern & Katz, 2017), lower relationship satisfaction (Wang et al., 2016), and feeling of depression (Wang et al., 2016).

Moreover, the fear of missing out (FOMO) sometimes acts as a catalyst, causing individuals to experience worry, which in turn leads them to embrace phubbing as a means of coping with their discomfort (Peleg & Boniel-Nissim, 2024).

Research on boss phubbing has investigated the mediating mechanisms that influence employee outcomes, including trust and job satisfaction (Roberts & David, 2020), and psychological needs (Yasin, 2021). According to (Heck et al., 2005), self-esteem is one of the most significant psychological channels through which workplace events or challenges influence employee outcomes.

Self-esteem, workplace incivility, and presenteeism are all significantly impacted when supervisors engage in phubbing during work hours (Hasan et al., 2024). The findings of another study showed that there is a negative relationship between leader phubbing and follower performance, namely in terms of work engagement and performance, as a result of a decreased perception of support from the leader (Bracht et al., 2024).

In the workplace, phubbing is found to be negatively related to supervisory trust, employees engagement (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016; Crowley et al., 2018) (Cameron & Webster, 2011; David & Roberts, 2017), life satisfaction and mood (David & Roberts, 2017; Roberts & David, 2016; Wang et al., 2016), interpersonal evaluation (Abeele et al., 2016; Misra et al., 2016; Przybylski & Weinstein, 2013), conversation quality (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2013) and self-esteem (Yasin, 2021). The study conducted by Yasin et al. (2020) revealed that belongingness and self-esteem mediate the relationship between supervisor phubbing and organizational self-esteem. A recent study by Roberts & David (2020), argued that employees' job performance is negatively correlated with their bosses' propensity to phubbing, while trust in supervisors and overall job satisfaction serve as mediators of this relationship.

It is concluded that individuals being phubbed may reciprocate the same behaviour (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas., 2016). Moreover, Karadağ et al. (2015), found that individuals who have previously experienced social rejection are more likely to engage in phubbing behaviour.

It has been suggested in research on the causes of phubbing (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016; Crowley et al., 2018) that if a person in authority starts phubbing frequently, it spreads throughout the organization and becomes the standard practice. The growing normalization of phubbing is a significant cause for alarm that needs to be investigated.

During these interactions, workers who are being phubbed have the feeling of being ignored and are socially alienated from the group (Abeele et al., 2016; Misra et al., 2016); this in turn leads to decreased levels of self-esteem based within organisations (Yasin, 2021); jealousy feelings (Krasnova et al., 2016); diminish levels of happiness in relationships and raise levels of depression (Wang et al., 2016) and a decreased level of satisfaction with life (Çikrikci et al., 2019).

Despite the overwhelming volume of evidence, academics assert that more study is required to determine how phubbees feel when they are phubbed and how phubbers view the behaviour of phubbing others (Yeslem et al., 2018). Furthermore, the previous researchers mainly focus on investigating outcomes of phubbing in a romantic relationship (Roberts & David, 2016), while only a few studies look into phubbing phenomena in the workplace

context (Roberts & David, 2017). In addition, in previous literature, only a few studies used the theoretical framework that could help them interpret their findings (Al-Saggaf & O'Donnell, 2019). To address these gaps, the present study aims to discover and understand the supervisor's phubbing phenomena both quantitatively and qualitatively. More specifically, the qualitative interview study provides a detailed description of the insight of both "Phubber" and "Phubbee" that further provides a clear understanding of why people phub others and their habit of phubbing (Al-Saggaf & MacCulloch, 2018). The semi-structured interview study also provides an opportunity to get a more comprehensive understanding of phubbing phenomena and their outcomes (Al-Saggaf & MacCulloch, 2018). To fill this gap, two separate yet parallel studies have been conducted.

## **Conclusion**

Understanding the evolution of phubbing since 2013 is the primary goal of this work, which aims to give a descriptive summary of phubbing research. In order to thoroughly investigate the research topics and compile the relevant phubbing literature (RQ.1), we adhere to the classification approach outlined by Cooper (1998). This process yields research topics that are associated with phubbing. Finally, this literature review informed the proposal of future research directions that could fill in some gaps in our understanding of phubbing behaviors (RQ.2) and provide new and intriguing information.

This systematic research review offers a full explanation of the factors that lead to phubbing behaviour with special focus on supervisors engaging in phubbing behavior within organizational contexts, as well as the consequences of such activity. This study highlights the significance of addressing the phenomena of supervisor phubbing by providing an explanation of the multifaceted nature of supervisor phubbing and its implications. The goal of this review is to promote healthier relationships in the workplace and improve organizational performance. According to Wolniewicz et al. (2018), the investigation of the impacts of excessive smartphone use on people's mental and physical health was the primary focus of researchers during the initial years of phubbing research, which began in 2014. Recent studies have shown that smartphone users are more likely to develop an addiction to their phones and to suffer from health issues (Demirci et al., 2015) comparable to those experienced by people with other types of addictions (Lee et al., 2015). Additionally, the results indicate that the majority of studies pertaining to self-esteem have been conducted in the field of psychology.

For the purpose of mitigating the adverse effects of supervisor phubbing, it is recommended that interventions be implemented that focus on individual awareness, organizational culture, and leadership behaviors. Furthermore, prospective research possibilities are outlined in order to further investigate the intricacies of supervisor phubbing and to provide evidence-based measures for the prevention and control of this phenomenon.

## **Recommendations**

The findings are designed to assist professionals and researchers in gaining a better understanding of the accumulated knowledge in this developing and fascinating area of research. The categories of this study, which are also known as the "psychological and technological" research fields, are the ones that are most closely related with publications on phubbing.

According to the reviewed literature, few studies have examined the consequences of phubbing on coworkers, and the majority have focused on romantic relationships (Roberts & David, 2016). There seems to be a need for theory around phubbing since very few



investigations have used theoretical frameworks that could help interpret the results. Many studies, mostly using questionnaires, have looked at the correlation between phubbing and negative emotional states such internet addiction, FOMO, and lack of self-control (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016). Controlled trials that account for the effect of previously unstudied variables, like narcissism, loneliness, and state boredom, can be useful for future research. Furthermore, in previous studies, a majority of the data was gathered using self-report measures. It is recommended that future research incorporate objective measurement methods.

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