



Effects Of Emotion Regulation Activities on Phubbing and Family Relationships Among Adolescents

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of emotion regulation activities on phubbing and family relationships among adolescents in Islamabad, Pakistan. The age range of population for the purpose of data collection was 10-19 years. The method was pretest, post-test interventional research. The population were 50 participants who were selected with purposive sampling technique. The intervention of emotion regulation activities were given to the targeted group in 5 sessions (each 25 minutes). At last the targeted groups had post-test. The scales used to assess the study variables were the General Scale of Phubbing (GSP) Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas (2018), containing 15 items, The Brief Family Relationship Scale (BFRS) Fok, James Allen & Henry (2011) containing 16 items. The descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and paired sample t-test were used for data analysis. It was hypothesized that there were a significant effect of emotion regulation activities on phubbing and family relationship among adolescents because Emotion regulation is the potential to regulate emotional reactions, especially in situations that may provoke emotions such as anxiety, stress, and frustration (Gross, 2014). The findings concluded that there was a significant impact of emotion regulation activities on phubbing and family relationship among adolescents and there is a positive relation between phubbing and family relationship.

Keywords: *Emotion Regulation, Family Relationships, Phubbing, Adolescent*



Introduction

Adolescence is a time for growth and is a very critical transition period. At this period adolescents cultivate their sense of self and relationships. During transitional period adolescents suffer many emotional and psychological problems that lead them towards phubbing and family relationship problems. Adolescents react and flare up more strongly and quickly to negative situations as compared to children and adults because their life is different. (Gross, 2014)

Phubbing can be defined by cell phone addiction, messaging addiction, social media addiction, Internet addiction, and gaming addiction (Karadağ et al., 2015). A research conducted by Savci & Aysan (2017), introduced that the group most prone to smartphone or internet addiction are teenagers and young adults. In this modern era everyone is busy in scrolling Instagram than talking to each other and creating distance in relationships that blocks intimacy.

Turkle (2011), observed that people spent more time on digital devices (such as mobile phones) and ignore people around them. In fact, in real life, mobile phone use can cause people to ignore others such as partners, friends, colleagues, parents, and offspring. Phubbing is considered as unfit act by phubbees, and perceived unsuitableness increases with the frequency with which cell phone is used during a social interaction or conversation (Klein, 2014).

Significance of the study:

Excessive phubbing behavior has become a pervasive issue in today's life. Many people spend a lot of time on their smart phones especially adolescents. This phenomena has negative effects on individual's emotional as well as psychological well-beings and functioning.

As day by day phubbing is increasing but as a social animal, humans need to engage in social activities and to build their web of relationships. Unfortunately, Phubbing is a trend that is arising with the popularity of smartphones that causes relationship problems. This study was conducted on adolescents to see how adolescents are more addicted to mobile phones.

Karadağ et al., (2015), conducted a research and indicate that phubbing is an avoidance behavior not only a habit. Research shows that phubbing evokes negative and resentful emotional reactions which leads people to perceive their interactions as of low quality.



(Guazzini et al., 2021). This study help us to see how phubbing can lead adolescents towards family relationship problems by providing better and detailed knowledge about it.

People of all ages are spending hours on these mobile devices. Spending too much time on cell phones is having a negative impact on human connections (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2013), (Roberts & David, 2016). Emotion regulation classify the various strategies that people can use to modify or change the physiological, subjective, and behavioral aspects of an emotional response (Gross, 1998). Emotion regulation involves a broad network of processes, including all conscious and unconscious strategies used to increase, maintain, or decrease one or more components of an emotional response. This research was conducted to see how emotional regulation training control phubbing and family relationship problems among adolescents. This research study also help the future researchers as they can get necessary information about the topic.

Overall, the rationale for this research study is to understand the relationship between emotion regulation activities and phubbing. The aim of this study was to promote the healthier smart phone use promote adolescents well-being and functioning.

Objectives of the study

1. To find out the effect of emotion regulation activities on phubbing and family relationship among adolescents.
2. To find out the relationship between phubbing and family relationship among adolescents.

Review of Literature

Research conducted by Deane et al., (2016), in this modern era there are very few people who do not have smart phone. But there are millions of people around the world that have their own cell phones and they continue to communicate with each other's using only their cell phones. Phubbing refers to ignoring communication partners in interpersonal interactions while focusing on one's cell phone which indicates that cellphone use in interpersonal interactions negatively affected relationship quality (Schneider and Hitzfeld, 2019).

One type of negligence is "Phubbing". Phubbing is a social rejection behavior related to smart phone use in which users ignore their social circle in order to use their phones. In one-to-one interactions, phubbing disrupts the sense of harmony (Kadylak et al., 2018). Phubbing has many destructive and hidden dangers than many virtual addictions. For this reason,



instead of increasing social interaction, smart phones can lead to disorders caused by misuse or excessive use of the Internet (Davey, Davey & Singh, 2016).

One of the research was conducted and states that the cellphone usage has suddenly increased in recent years. 98% of Internet users aged between 16 to 20 years and they have at least one cellphone and spend 4 hours in using smart phones each day. Al-Saggaf & Macculloch (2019) conducted research on 387 participants by online survey and investigated that people phub family and friends more than strangers and in family system participant's phub parents, spouses and children as compared to grandparents. Certain people are phubbed in specific situations depends on the social norms.

Phubbing becomes a continuous issue in a relationship. Phubbing makes your relationships feel unwanted and unimportant especially when you're busy scrolling through your phone. Many emerging studies continually testifying to the fact that Phubbing is a danger factor for interpersonal relationships. In the family system, "partner phubbing" reduces the mental health, relationship quality, and satisfaction of spouses (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016).

Mobile snubbing has become a part of everyday life. This can make it difficult for the couple to focus on restoring a satisfactory relationship. Research findings suggest that sensitivity to perceived phubbing behavior may be associated with self-attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance of partners (Bröning and Wartberg, 2022). A. Robert and E. David (2016), conducted a study to investigate the frequent behavior and impact of phubbing on relationship satisfaction and personal well-being among a sample of 145 adults and the results indicates that there is negative impact of phubbing on relationship satisfaction and ultimately life satisfaction and phubbing indirectly affects the life.

A research conducted by Ochs. C (2022), demonstrated that workplace phubbing have negative effects on prior impression, subjective state, and performance, as well as shed light on possible coping mechanisms for the use of phubees.

Defining family is most difficult because there is a diversity of definitions of family. Family is defined as legal ties, a bond by sharing common blood or share commitments to one another. According to burgess (1942), Family is a group individuals united to form a household, mother and father, sister and brother, interacting and communicating with each other. As parents are main pillar of family, and Parenting is the most key part of a child's life. Parenting involves bring or raising a child properly and preparing them for the challenges to



face the world. Parents are the first social organization of a child who influences their child through the process of all the thick and thins (Nazir et al.,2023). This influence can be positive, or it can be negative depending upon the style of parenting adopted by the parents. Research conducted by Shaffer and Kipp (2010), investigated that within the family system, the relationship between parent-child is important for development in late childhood and adolescence. Nowadays, phubbing is creating a wall between parents and children's that is hurting child mental and emotional health.

In this new time everyone say they want to spend quality time with their family but no one is ready to put their smartphones away and they end up being more distracted. Due to which relationships feel unwanted and unimportant and effect family emotional health. A research was conducted which concluded that parental phubbing became a danger factor for depression, which may adversely affect the mental welfare of junior high school students and also concluded that Mobile phone use consumes a lot of time for individuals and has a significant impact on relationships (Burchell, 2015), (Xiao & Zhang, 2022).

Emotion regulation is a skill that a person manages to keep strong or extreme emotions under control so that they are not overwhelmed. If childhood environments do not provide adequate opportunities for learning, a person cannot develop the skills to regulate emotions.

Adolescence is a crucial time period for the development of emotion regulation, a period of time to develop implicit and explicit skills that can be used to monitor, analyze, and modify emotional responses according to the goals. (Gross, 2010), (Braunstein, J Gross & N Ochsner, 2017).

Emotion regulation is an important form of self-regulation and a process by which people consciously or unconsciously control their emotions to respond properly to environmental demands. While some adolescents may have excellent coping skills, and just like any skill, emotion regulation is also a skill it can be learned and improved with practices. When an individual faced with stressful situations any type of emotional regulation coping strategy (hypocritical or maladaptive) can be used (Piri et al., 2019). Domoff et al., (2020), conducted a research and found that youth with higher emotion regulation concerns are at increased risk for multiple addictions (food addiction, phone addiction).

The theory of Emotion regulation postulates that emotion regulation plays a vital role in the association that the family environment influences aggressive behavior (Kawabata et al. 2011). In addition to emotion regulation, emotions themselves may mediate the effect of the



family environment on aggression. In particular, unpredictable parenting creates anxiety in children that subsequently leads to aggressive behavior (Granic, 2014).

Salinas, Escoriaza & Orejudo (2022), concluded in their research that increased use of internet has affected behavior and normal pattern of everyday life among adolescents. These behaviors include phubbing and cyber gossiping and can be prevented by developing emotional competence or emotional regulation techniques can be used to overcome the urge of excessive internet use.

Silvers (2022), conducted a study to prove that adolescence is the most important time for the development of emotional regulation. It is a learned behavior that can be improved drastically over time. Similarly, this is the time when psychopathology can be worsened due to difficulty in emotional regulation. This study proved how emotion regulation, caregiving and neurodevelopment is developed during adolescents.

Knausenberger, Leucher & Echterhoff (2022), empirically studied how being phubbed influences mood, behavior needs and feelings of being alienated or ostracized among people. Their study suggested that how positive emotional regulation can help with decreasing the symptoms of anxiety and depression in adolescents.

Parent phubbing is described as the excessive use of smart phones by parents while avoiding their children. Excessive use of phone by parents in presence of children causes negative impact on internal and external behaviors later in their adolescence. Lacking attention and connection, being neglected and ignored by parents during childhood an adolescent might find itself in situations like depression, behavioral and personality disorders and excessive use of phone and internet (a learnt behavior or coping strategy). It can also lead to aggressive behaviors among adolescents as coping mechanism for being neglected during the childhood. These behaviors are proved by past studies and researches conducted by (Geng et al., 2021), (Liu et al., 2021).

Zhou, Li & Gong (2022), conducted a study to prove how parental phubbing is associated with gaming addiction in children and adolescents. This study investigated parent child relationships and depressive symptoms in relationship with phubbing and gaming addiction. The results further proved the fact that depressive symptoms were a factor in phubbing amongst parents and gaming addiction amongst adolescents. It was concluded that improved



parent child relationships could possibly control depressive symptoms amongst children and thus also prevent internet gaming addiction.

Zhang, Ding & Wang (2021), conducted a study based on previous researches that showed a positive and direct affiliation of parental phubbing with phone addiction in adolescents further elaborated how social anxiety and low self-esteem becomes a cause in phone addictions in adolescents due to parental phubbing in childhood. They used an I-PACE model (Interaction of Person Affect Cognition Execution) to prove this. They used a sample of 471 high school students including 282 girls and 189 boys. The results proved what was aimed to prove through this study. Self-esteem and social anxiety were a major factor in phone addiction amongst adolescents.

Research Methodology

This research design was pre and post intervention research within group. In research study, Purposive sampling technique was used in the process of sampling from the targeted population. The sample of the study was Adolescents between 10-19 years of age. The data from the sample was collected from Islamabad, Pakistan. Adolescents between age ranges 10-19 was part of the study. Both gender had given equal chance to be the part of this research. Adolescents with physical disabilities and psychological disorders were excluded from the research

Procedure

- **Pre-testing:** In this step, 50 adolescents were asked to fill the questionnaire in 25 minutes; it was assured that they fill it without any time pressure. The questionnaire contained a consent form, a demographic sheet, General Phubbing scale (GPS) and Brief Family Relationship scale (BFRS). Participants who scored moderate and high levels of Phubbing and family relationship problems were selected for intervention.
- **Intervention:** The intervention of emotion regulation activities were given to the participants in 5 sessions (each 25 minutes).
- **Post-testing:** Consent form and demographic sheet were excluded from the questionnaire that was used during post-testing. Post-testing questionnaire only comprised of the 15- item GPS scale, 16-item BFRS scale. After giving Intervention (Emotion Regulation activities) to the participants. The responses was collected by the researchers.



Table 1

Sessions	Purpose	Assignment	Possible outcomes
Session 1	Purpose: Develop mutual relationship and Get to Know the objectives of the meeting between researcher and participants.	Activity: Emoji charts will be given to participants and ask them to Identify and differentiate between different emotions and by naming and labeling them.	Get aware of different emotions in daily life and develop insights into what those emotions mean.
Session 2	Purpose: understanding the concept between Primary and secondary emotions.	Activity: Make 5 group. Each group contain 6 individuals and practice talk it out activity in groups to discuss their emotions and problems that they face in everyday situations.	Knowing your emotions helps you talk about feelings more clearly and avoid or better resolve the conflicts.
Session 3	Purpose: Identifying emotions in physical and psychological states.	Activity: Sit up straight in a comfortable chair and Place your hands on your stomach. Close your mouth and take slow, deep breaths through your nose and fill your belly with air. Breathe out slowly and completely through pursed lips.	Consider what makes them sad, frustrated or angry. Deep breathing Helps you stop and redirect the flow of your negative emotions.
Session 4	Purpose: A change of focus, that is, to direct them pay attention to or avoid threatening cues.	Activity: Sit in a peaceful place and keep a pen and paper with yourself. Write down your thoughts, feelings, emotions, fear and any awful experience you face that causes rumination and then challenge your negative thoughts and replace them with positive one.	Decreases attentional resources to unwanted or irrelevant inputs and their psychological health and interpersonal relationships will be enhanced.
Session 5	Purpose: changing cognitive assessment; situations do not directly influence emotions. Cognitive reappraisal Considered as a strategic focus Between situations and emotions.	Activity: Evaluate negative situations that affect emotions and positive re-appraisals for emotional self-regulation. Write down the positive thoughts and feelings that are reframe by negative one on a daily routine chart and start practicing to regulate emotions and better cope with negative emotional distress.	Gain a broader and better perception of a problems and react with more positivity and get a permanent solution to emotional distress.



Results

The research study was aimed to explore the effect of emotion regulation activities on phubbing and family relationship among adolescents. Relevant statistical analysis was used to analyze the data. All analysis was performed using SPSS-22 software.

The internal consistencies of the scales in pre testing and post testing were determined with the help of Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient. Moreover, mean and standard deviation, ranges, skewness and kurtosis were determined by descriptive statistics of the sample (see Table 2).

The relation between General scale of phubbing and Brief family relationship during pre-testing were determined by Correlation analysis through SPSS software (see Table 3).

Lastly the paired sample t test (see Table 4) was used to determine the significant difference in the sample score before and after intervention.

The results findings show that there is a positive relationship between phubbing and family relationship and there is also significant effects of emotion regulation activities on phubbing and family relationship among adolescents.

Table 2

Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis of General Scale Of Phubbing (GSP) And Brief Family Relationship Scale (BFRS). (n=37)

Scales	k	α	Actual Range		Potential Range		SD	M	Skewness	Kurtosis
			Min	Max	Min	Max				
GSP (Pre.)	15	.424	60	87	15	105	7.34	75	-.14	-.97
BFRS (Pre.)	16	.516	28	51	16	64	5.59	44	-1.4	2.18
GSP (Post.)	15	.458	24	49	1.00	105	4.82	38	-.68	1.24
BFRS (Post.)	16	.313	24	40	10	64	3.97	31	.22	-.54

Note. GSP = General Scale of Phubbing; BFRS = Brief Family Relationship Scale; Pre. = Pre-testing; Post. = Post-testing; SD = Standard Deviation; M = Mean.



Table 3

Inter-correlation Analysis between General Scale of Phubbing (GSP) and Brief Family Relationship Scale (BFRS). (n=37)

Variables	1	2
1. GSP (Pre-testing)	-	0.281**
2. BFRS (Pre-testing)	0.281**	-

Note. GSP = General Scale of Phubbing; BFRS = Brief Family Relationship Scale.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 3 shows the correlation between General Scale of Phubbing (GSP) and Brief Family Relationship Scale (BFRS). GSP was positively correlated with BFRS. The correlation value lies between the range of 0.2 to 0.4, which indicates a weak positive association between these variables.

Table 4

The mean differences, SD, P, t measurements of phubbing and family relations concerning pre-test (n=37) and post-test (n=37) among targeted group.

Variables	Pre-test (n=37)		Post-test (n=37)		t	p	95% CI		Cohens d
	M	S.D	M	S.D			UL	LL	
GSP	74.94	7.34	38.32	4.81	26.4	0.00	39.42	33.81	1.64
BFRS	43.83	5.58	31.37	3.97	10.0	0.00	14.97	9.94	4.3

Note. t= Units of standard Error; S.D=standard deviation; df = Degree of Freedom; LL= lower limit; UL= upper limit.

Table 4 shows that there is significant effect of Emotion regulation activities on phubbing and family relationship. As mean value of GSP is 74.94 and the standard deviation is 7.34 but after Intervention mean and standard deviation is decreases to 38.32 and 4.81 respectively. These differences are highly significant because the p value is (0.00) which is less than 0.01.

Discussion

Adding up the more obvious benefits, such as feeling better, Emotion regulation skills or activities can also enhance long-term health, at work it improves performances, improve personal relationships, and even can improve overall wellbeing. The aim of this research



study was to find out the Effects of emotion regulation activities on phubbing and family relationships among adolescents.

The targeted population was adolescents. The age range from 13 to 19 years. The total participants selected for research were 50. In this study pre and post interventional research design was used to find out the significant results.

General scale of phubbing (GSP) developed by Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas in 2018 and Brief Family relationships scale (BFRS) developed by Ting Fok, Allen and Henry (2013) is a standardized scale that was used for pre-testing and post-testing. All of the variables are assessed through reliable scales.

Adolescence is a time period of challenges and they face many tasks to deal with emotions but at the age of adolescence when they are unable to control their emotions, family conflicts erupts that leads towards family problems and they started phubbing to neglect their interpersonal relationships.

The research study was conducted on adolescents because the habit of phubbing was more common in adolescents. The research was conducted on college students which shows that phubbing is more common at college level. Davey et al., (2018), in their research states that the level of phubbing is highly significantly associated with college students.

One of the objective of the study was to find out the effects of emotion regulation activities on phubbing and family relationship among adolescents. A study on 177 adolescents found that adolescents who practiced few emotion regulation strategies or with fewer emotion regulation resources had higher levels of internalizing problems than adolescents who used more emotion regulation activities have fewer internal problems. (P. Loughheed and Hollenstein, 2012). Fu et.,al (2020), conducted a research and stated that Emotion regulation difficulty among adolescents can leads them towards mobile phone usage.

The first hypothesis stated that “the emotion regulation activities would have significant effect on phubbing and family relationship among adolescents” in lights of the results of the current study, the first hypothesis was accepted.

The second objective was to find out the relationship between phubbing and family relationship among adolescents. (wei, lu and liu, 2022) conducted a study and reported that when children do not feel enough emotional attachment to their parents, they may look for it elsewhere. Nowadays, young people often turn to mobile phones for feelings of love and



respect. The second hypothesis stated that phubbing and family relationship has a positive relationship. It was supported by the findings of the study as shown in table 3 and in table 4.

Adolescents who have neglected by their parents due to parental phubbing are more likely to get addicted towards mobile phone addiction. Our study proved that phubbing is positively associated with family relationships.

Conclusion

By applying and testing emotion regulation activities among adolescents, it was established that emotion regulation activities has significant effect on phubbing and family relationships among adolescents. Moreover, phubbing and family relationship is positively correlated with each other. The results shows that practicing Emotion regulation activities can help in reducing phubbing level and family problems. Emotion regulation activities helps in maintaining healthier and more harmonious family environment and support each other to regulate emotions and reduce phubbing behavior.

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