Impact of Phubbing on Relationship Closeness and Jealousy in Working Women

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Technology advancement has bridged the communication gap with distant others while causing disruption among those physically present, i.e., "technoference or phubbing", which leads to jealousy, or the feeling of being ignored, and distant relationship. The current study examined the role of phubbing on relationship closeness and jealousy among married working women through a Generic Scale of Phubbing (GSP; Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018), Multidimensional Jealousy Scale (MJS; Pfeiffer & Wong, 1989), and Unidimensional Relationship Closeness Scale (URCS; Dibble et al., 2012). The co-relational research design was employed. The sample consisted of $N = 200$ participants, age range 25-35 ($M = 21.09$, $SD = 1.94$), determined through G* power, and gathered via a convenient sampling strategy. Findings revealed phubbing and its subdomains have a significant relationship with relationship closeness and jealousy, however, dimensions vary. Linear regression demonstrated that being phubber is a significant positive predictor of relationship closeness and negative predictor of jealousy.

Keywords: phubbing, phubber, relationship closeness, jealousy, and working women.

Effective communication is an essential component of a successful intimate relationship (Cizmeci, 2017; Eğeci & Gençöz, 2006). According to Kansky (2018), three components influence satisfaction in a romantic relationship which are, affinity, devotedness, and fidelity towards the partner. Cepukiene (2019) highlighted factors associated with contentment in intimate relationships. They included behavior in conflicting situations, psychological and sexual intimacy, trustworthiness, and fulfilling partner's needs, sharing similar interests and pursuits with mutual goals. In the past few years, there has been a rapid usage of smartphones in day-to-day personal life. They have become a vital component of our daily lives, irrespective of age, across the globe (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas 2018). This current technology profusion leads to technological interruptions in couples' interaction which is termed as technoference (McDaniel & Coyne, 2016) or phubbing, a blend of "phone" and "ignorance" towards a romantic partner (Roberts & David, 2016). Lately, several researchers have focused on the effects of technoference or phubbing among couples and found it as a common phenomenon within an intimate relationship. The higher extent of phubbing is linked with jealousy, relational discord, and a lower rate of relationship cohesion, gratification, and intimacy (Amichai-Hamburger & Etgar, 2016; Halpern & Katz, 2017; Krasnova et al., 2016; McDaniel & Coyne, 2016; McDaniel et al., 2018; Roberts & David, 2016; Wang et al., 2017). Henceforth, excessive usage of technology disrupts positive interaction among couples and propels negative feelings and conflict, which further negatively impacts the relationship (Gottman & Levenson, 2002). Still, the findings in literature are inconclusive such as Cizmeci (2017) found that phubbing does not

negatively influence relationship satisfaction in couples. Similar findings were observed in other studies as well (Hall et al. 2014; Halpern & Katz, 2017; Roberts & David, 2016; Wang et al., 2017). The differences observed were due to different moderators which directly affect the result of phubbing and in turn, this positively influences relationship closeness or has no impact on relationship satisfaction.

Previous studies have reported that marital relationship, self-esteem, and gender also play the role of moderator in some cases (Hall et al., 2014; Halpern & Katz 2017; Roberts & David 2016; Wang et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2021). Wang and his colleagues (2017) also observed in their study that the length of relationship moderates partner phubbing impact on relationship satisfaction. The current study did not control moderator variables however, the researcher tried to study the impact of some of the variables on study variables. For this purpose, the length of a marriage is included in demographic variables and only married women were the targeted population.

Phubbing and being phubbed are two different phenomena and they impact our perception differently. An important aspect of phubbing is when a person is being phubbed, they denounce it as both annoying and disrespectful in an intimate relationship, however, they rarely admit to being engaged in phubbing significant others. In simpler words, they usually act in concordance with their moral standards. In one such study participants criticized phubbing yet they engaged in phubbing their partners and family members and admitted that they unintentionally engage in phubbing behavior and drift into technology usage (Aagaard, 2020). In another study, Rainie and Zickuhr (2015) found that 85 % of participants focused that phubbing hurts conversation in relationships however, at the same time 89 % of participants also admit that they were engaged in personal phubbing behavior (being phubber) during their time with others. Individuals were unable to realize their dependency on mobile phones, and in turn, their behavior becomes normalized and they are unable to identify social cues indicating the impact on their intimate relationships. Subsequently, inept in identifying how their relationship may suffer due to personal phubbing (David & Robert, 2017). Considering existing literature, the current study intended to explore the perception of a person involved in phubbing their partner, and how they perceive their act of phubbing impacts relationship closeness and whether it leads to jealousy or not.

Rapid usage of any behavior, such as excessive mobile usage, makes it a normative and acceptable behavior in any society (Sunstein, 1996). Norms can be driven by any personal or observable behavior (Miller & Prentice, 1996). In current technology advancement, it is possible to imply that the constant observable behavior of being phubbed and being a phubber (personally engaging in phubbing behavior) makes phubbing a normative societal behavior. As human beings, individuals desire to have social relationships which is a fundamental and universal need (Lee & Shrum 2012). When one of the partners is involved in constant phubbing behavior, the other partner ultimately feels the absence of their counterpart which hampers basic needs, such as control and affiliation (Roberts & David, 2016). Krasnova et al. (2016)'s study also demonstrated that phubbing behavior spurs jealousy, desertion, and is a perceived threat due to trivial interactions among partners which are essential for having a satisfactory romantic relationship.

According to the socio-technological model, human interaction with technology is a complex phenomenon, and when there are no agreed rules in the context of appropriate technology usage, it distances family relationships and affects communication and emotional bonding among partners (Lanigan, 2009). Displacement theory explains the detrimental effects

of excessive indulgence in media on partner dyadic satisfaction (Valkenburg & Peter 2007). Kraut et al. (1998) argued that by utilization of the internet, individuals are trying to substitute inadequate social relationships for better relationships. Considering this perspective, phubbing negatively affects the quality of a relationship and thus leads to negative emotions such as jealousy, envy, and anger, etc. (Roberts & David 2016; Wang et al., 2017).

Symbolic interactionism postulates that people interactively use different symbols to cultivate a sense for themselves which are based on different metaphors and associated meanings which in turn are handled and adapted through (Halpern & Katz 2017; Stryker 1999). Similarly, people associate meanings to these technology-based communications as they would to other means of interaction. According to the attribution theory, lack of attention and irresponsibility towards the partner spur differences among couples and triggers negative responses such as jealousy, anger, etc. Although, individuals are mostly aware of being envious or jealous towards others, occasionally the allied reason for this feeling of envy is buried deep in the unconscious, and camouflaged by rationalizations which is the case in phubbing (Bauerle et al., 2002).

The interdependences theory postulates that relational affiliation can be categorized by the interdependence of partner on one another, in which each partner depend on needs and closeness among relationship (Murray & Holmes, 2011). Perceived relationship quality includes relationship commitment, investment, and dependency which determines partner interdependency level. Hence, positive and negative relationships are simultaneously shared and communicated among couples. Thus, a married couple is more often affected by the relationship problem with phubbing (Totenhagen et al., 2016). Existing research found that phubbing behavior among married couples are represented by a lack of closeness to one another, and this leads to jealousy and poor mental well-being (McNulty & Karney, 2002; Rodriguez et al., 2013). Considering existing literature, the current study intends to explore the impact of phubbing on relationship closeness and triggering different negative emotions in our collectivist society.

Contemporary research demonstrates that when couples use a smartphone in the presence of their companion while ignoring the need for the connectedness of their partner, it creates relationship differences (Al-Saggaf et al., 2018). Another research illustrated that men were more likely to indulge in their smartphones in the presence of wives which affects relationship closeness leading to low relational satisfaction (Wang et al., 2017). Considering contemporary literature, the current study intends to explore how phubbing affects relationship closeness among working married women. Research also demonstrates that phubbing negatively impacts conversation quality in close relationships (Abeele et al., 2016) which is another objective of the study at hand. Men are more likely to indulge in smartphones while ignoring their wives which negatively affects women triggering negative emotions such as jealousy, envy, etc. (Chen et al., 2017). Due to this, they are more likely to engage in phubbing behavior themselves and this, in turn, works as a vicious cycle impacting their relationship and causing negative emotions such as envy and jealousy which is the focus of the current study.

Previous researches have shown that phubbing causes a lack of attention towards the partner and spurs fear of losing an intimate relationship (Schmitt et al., 1994). Furthermore, fear of losing a partner was more likely in women than men, leading to jealousy experienced by women (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Phubbing causes jealousy in wives which leads to doubts (Chiffriller & Hennessy, 2006). Jealousy in itself is a strong reaction that is harmful to a healthy relationship. Existing literature linked phubbing with low relational satisfaction and evoking jealousy (McDaniel & Coyne, 2016; Roberts & David, 2016). Considering existing literature, one of the objectives of the current study was to assess whether phubbing is a predictor of

jealousy in an intimate relationship. In an individualistic culture, couples are more inclined to their partner and it is acceptable behavior. But in a collectivist culture, there is no openness to demonstrate closeness in the presence of others in Asian society (Taywade & Khubalkar, 2019). This further intensifies the impact of phubbing on married couples. However, Islamic ideology influences differently in cultures. Cizmeci (2017) found no negative relationship between partner phubbing and relationship satisfaction in the Turkish sample as Islamic ideology imposes continuation of relationship in all circumstances. So, the present study intends to explore the cultural differences and the relation between phubbing and relationship closeness, and the effect of phubbing has on jealousy in working women living in the collectivistic Islamic culture of Pakistan.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the relationship between phubbing, relationship closeness, and jealousy among married working women.
- To explore the predictive role of phubbing on jealousy and relationship closeness in working women.

Hypotheses of the Study

- There is likely to be a relationship between phubbing, relationship closeness, and jealousy in married working women.
- Phubbing is likely to be a significant predictor of jealousy and relationship closeness among married women.

Method

Research Design

The co-relational research design was employed in the current study.

Sample

The sample size was determined through G Power leading to $N = 200$ participants with the age range of 25-35 years ($M = 21.09$, $SD = 1.94$). The data were collected from married working women from private and public universities through a convenient sampling strategy. As per the inclusion criterion, only those women were included in the study who have at least spent one year with their spouse. Whereas those diagnosed with any physical and psychological illnesses were excluded from the study. The details of demographics can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1
Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Sample

Characteristics	n	$\%$	M	SD
Age			21.09	1.94
Family system				
Joint family system	98	49		
Nuclear family system	102	51		
Institute				
Government	71	35.5		
Private	129	64.5		

Instruments

***The Generic Scale of Phubbing** (GSP; Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018)*
        The Generic Scale of Phubbing (GSP) developed by Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas (2018) consists of 15 items used to evaluate phubbing behaviour. It is a seven point Likert scale, ranging from *"never"* to *"always"*. It consists of four sub-scales: Nomophobia (fear of detachment from one's mobile phone), Interpersonal Conflict (perceived conflict between oneself and others), Self-isolation (using phone to escape from social activities), and Problem Acknowledgment (acknowledging that person have a phubbing problem). Chronbach's alpha reliability estimate of GSP in the present study was observed to be $\alpha = 0.93$ and for sub-scales, it ranged from .85 to .93.

***Multidimensional Jealousy Scale** (MJS; Pfeiffer & Wong, 1989)*
        The Multidimensional Jealousy Scale (MJS) developed by Pfeiffer and Wong (1989) measures three components of jealousy on a seven point rating scale. On cognitive and behavioral scale rating ranged from "*never*" to *"all the times"* whereas on the emotional subscale rating extended from *"very pleased"* to *"very upset"*. The Cronbach alpha reliability estimate of the scale was .78 with subscales observed to be above .80 in the present study.

***The Unidimensional Closeness Relationship Scale** (URCS; Dibble et al., 2012)*
        The Unidimensional Closeness Relationship Scale (URCS) is a self-report measure focused on assessing closeness in any social or personal relationship. This scale is also a seven point Likert scale ranging from *"strongly agree"* to *"strongly disagree"* with an alpha reliability estimate of .94 in the current study.

Procedure
        In consideration of the ethical requirements of the study, the research proposal was reviewed by the Institutional Research Board. Permission was sought by the authors of the scales along with consent taken from different institutes for the data collection purposes. The pilot study was conducted on 20 participants to ascertain whether the scales were comprehensible or needed to be translated into a native language. As the target population was educated working women, they were easily able to understand the scales. Based on the pilot study, scales were not translated into their native language.

Ethical Considerations
        The data was individually collected after briefing about the research purpose and taking written consent from the participants. They were also briefed that they could withdraw at any stage without detrimental consequences and data would only be used for research purposes while ensuring anonymity. Moreover, it was ensured that they are not harmed physically or psychologically during the research process.

<div align="center">

Results
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        The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics in different steps. First of all, descriptive statistics were computed to obtain a preliminary profile of study variables, and reliability was established through Cronbach's alpha reliability. In the second step, Pearson product-moment correlation was analysed to assess the relationship between phubbing,

relationship closeness, jealousy, and demographic variables. In the last step, linear regression was computed to predict the effect of phubbing on relationship closeness and jealousy.

Table 2

Descriptive of the Generic Scale of Phubbing, Unidimensional Closeness Relationship, and Multidimensional Jealousy Scale

Scale	M	SD	Range	Cronbach's α
GSP	53.42	17.42	28 – 96	.93
NP	16.87	5.45	5 – 28	.85
IC	14.60	6.24	4 – 28	.93
SI	13.00	5.39	4 – 26	.85
PA	8.94	3.61	3 – 19	.89
URC	70.46	11.98	21 – 84	.94
MJS	69.16	13.34	44 – 120	.78
Cognitive	11.56	5.15	8 – 35	.84
Emotional	38.66	9.15	13 – 56	.89
Behavioral	18.94	8.43	8 – 45	.83

Note. GSP=Generic Scale of Phubbing; NP=Nomophobia; IC=Interpersonal Conflict; SI=Self-isolation; PA= Problem acknowledgment; URC=Unidimensional Relationship Closeness; MJS=Multidimensional Jealousy Scale.

Table 2 demonstrated that all study variables have a satisfactory reliability coefficient which is above the minimum range of .60 (van Griethuijsen, et. al., 2014).

Table 3

Inter-Correlation among Phubbing and sub-domains, Relationship Closeness, Jealousy and sub-domains, and Demographic Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. GSP	-	.75**	.93**	-.10	.76**	.14*	-.18**	-.05	-.20**	-.04	-.05	.09
2. NP	-	-	.66**	-.22**	.31**	.32**	-.27**	.02	-.37**	-.03	-.06	-.02
3. IC	-	-	-	-.13	.62**	.10	-.11	-.09	-.13	.03	-.11	.00
4. SI	-	-	-	-	.05	-.17*	.18*	.18*	.15*	.01	-.06	.08
5. PA	-	-	-	-	-	.04	-.16*	-.22**	.03	-.15*	.02	.01
6. URC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.30*	-.43**	.17*	-.41**	-.25**	-.26**
7. MJS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.36**	.59**	.73**	.14**	.28**
8. Cognitive	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.26**	.24**	.18*	.27**
9. Emotional	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.02	.04	.05
10. Behavioral	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.07	.23**
11.Year of Job	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.58**
12. Marriage (Years)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. GSP= Generic Scale of Phubbing; NP=Nomophobia; IC=Interpersonal Conflict; SI=Self-isolation; PA=Problem Acknowledgment; URC=Unidimensional Relationship Closeness; MJS= Multidimensional Jealousy Scale. *p <.05; **p <.01

The findings of Table 3 revealed that phubbing is significantly positively correlated with relationship closeness and negatively correlated with jealousy, moreover, non-significantly correlated with years of job and years of marriage. The subscale of nomophobia is positively correlated with relationship closeness, and negatively correlated with jealousy, emotional jealousy. The interpersonal conflict dimension of phubbing is non-significantly correlated to study variables and demographic variables. Self-isolation is significantly positively associated with jealousy and its domains of cognitive and emotional jealousy, but non-significantly related to behavioral jealousy. The sub-scale of problem acknowledgment is negatively correlated with jealousy and its sub-scale cognitive and behavioral jealousy.

Relationship closeness demonstrated a significant negative correlation with self-isolation, jealousy, cognitive, behavioral jealousy, years of job, years of marriage and positively correlated with emotional jealousy. No relationship was found between interpersonal conflict and relationship closeness.

Jealousy was found to be significantly positively associated with years of job and years of marriage and negatively correlated with phubbing. Cognitive jealousy is positively correlated with years of job and years of marriage. Behavioral jealousy is positively associated with years of marriage.

Table 4
Phubbing as a Predictor of Relationship Closeness

Variable	B	β	SE
Constant	65.35		2.72
GSP	.096	.139	.048
R^2	.019*		
ΔR^2	.014		

Note. GSP= Generic Scale of Phubbing*; N*=200. *$^{*}p$ <.05.

Phubbing positively predicts relationship closeness with a variance of 19 % $F(1,198) = 3.91, p < 0.05$.

Tale 5
Phubbing as a Predictor of Jealousy

Variable	B	β	SE
Constant	76.77		3.00
GSP	-.143	-.186	.053
R^2	.035**		
ΔR^2	.030		

Note. GSP= Generic Scale of Phubbing; *N*=200. $^{**}p$ <.01.

The results revealed that jealousy was significantly negatively predicted by phubbing and explains 35 % of variance $F(1,198) = 7.10, p < 0.01$.

Discussion

The objective of the present study was to explore the relationship between phubbing, relationship closeness, and jealousy in working married women and to determine the impact of phubbing on jealousy and relationship closeness. The results of the current study demonstrate that phubbing is positively correlated with relationship closeness, nomophobia, and a positive predictor of relationship closeness. However, being involved in phubbing behavior is negatively correlated with feelings of jealousy, emotional and behavioral jealousy. and a negative predictor of jealousy which is consistent with the existing literature (Amichai-Hamburger & Etgar, 2016; Halpern & Katz, 2017; Krasnova et al., 2016; McDaniel & Coyne, 2016; McDaniel et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2017). When an individual is a victim of phubbing behavior, they intentionally or unintentionally reciprocate similar behavior. With repetitive reciprocity, it becomes a normative behavior (Axelrod, 1986; Miller & Prentice, 1996; Sherif, 1936). In the current study, similar findings were observed as phubbing significantly positively predicts relationship closeness with 19 % of the variance and negatively predicts jealousy with 35 % of the variance. The reason might be that phubbing has become a normative behavior with an increase in the prevalence of multitasking and they are unable to foresee its negative consequences that is why they perceive their relationship as still intact (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016; Vorderer et al., 2018). Constant excessive smartphone usage leads to intentional and unintentional disconnection among individuals which, in turn, becomes a vicious cycle of phubbing (Barford, 2013; David & Roberts, 2020; Kelly, 2015; Mount, 2015) leading to jealousy which is seen in the findings of the current study. This can further be explained by symbolic interactionism theory which states that individuals' actions towards others are determined on the basis of meaning they devise for themselves and these interpretations can be altered via an interpretative process involving self-reflective individuals interacting symbolically with others (Halpern & Katz, 2017). Individuals having high self-esteem rather remain unaffected by phubbing as they do not perceive it as a problem. Thus, individuals having high self-esteem are less prone to the negative impact on relationship closeness due to phubbing (Wang et al., 2021). This might be one of the reasons that phubbing is positively correlated with relationship closeness in the current study, as the sample are working women who are likely to have high self-esteem and also engage with their gadgets due to their job requirements. Thus they don't perceive engaging in phubbing behavior as a problem impacting their relationship closeness.

The current study demonstrated that phubbing is positively associated with relationship closeness which is in line with the studies conducted by Wang and his colleagues (2021) and Cizmeci's (2017) study conducted on couples in Turkey. Cizmeci (2017) found in his study that women reported more relationship satisfaction with phubbing behavior. The reason they gave was related to practicing the Islamic ideology in Turkey in which marriage is considered as sacred and continuation of marriage is integral in terms of public expectation (Hunler & Gencoz, 2005). Similar findings were observed in the current study as phubbing was found to be positively associated with relationship closeness by married working women. They try to maintain their marital relationship in all circumstances for the sake of others, due to the influence of collectivist culture and Islamic ideology, and they are unable to foresee the impact phubbing behavior can have on their relationship.

According to Sakalli-Ugurlu (2003), women tend to work harder to maintain their relationship that is why they are likely to report more relationship satisfaction even while engaging in phubbing behavior. On account of this, they acknowledge the problem associated with phubbing behavior (problem acknowledgment) and try to detach mobile usage

(nomophobia) which is positively allied with relationship closeness and decreases the feeling of jealousy among working women. This is more likely found in our collectivist culture as women are considered more responsible for maintaining a marital relationship as compared to men. So, they are more focused on acknowledging phubbing problems and try to intentionally resolve it and this, in turn, decreases jealousy and increases relationship closeness among them even while engaging in phubbing behavior.

The findings of the current study further revealed that relationship closeness is significantly negatively correlated with jealousy and its sub-domains of cognitive and behavioral jealousy which is also supported by the existing studies (Pfeiffer & Wong, 1989; Roberts & David, 2016), and demonstrated that as relationship closeness increases, the feeling of jealousy automatically decreases. Relationship closeness was also positively correlated with emotional jealousy which is supported by existing literature. Pfeiffer and Wong (1989) found in their study, that love for a partner in an intimate relationship was positively associated with emotional jealousy, yet negatively correlated with cognitive jealousy. Similar findings were reported by another study as emotional jealousy was allied with greater relationship intimacy, while cognitive jealousy was linked to uncertainty among relationships (Knoblach et al., 2001). Barelds and Barelds-Dijkstra (2007) observed in their study that individuals who perceived a higher level of jealousy reported lower relationship quality that ultimately aggravated relationship problems (Buunk, 1997).

Years of marriage and years of being on job were found to be positively correlated with jealousy and negatively associated with relationship closeness. When partners are involved in excessive smartphone usage for a longer duration (comprised of years) due to their job requirements, this, in turn, interferes with offline human interaction and relationship quality (Abeele et al., 2016; Przybylski & Weinstein 2013). Ultimately, the other partner becomes frustrated and this leads to relationship problems (Oduor et al. 2016).

The current findings are consistent with existing literature as it has been observed in our indigenous collectivist culture that self-isolation due to phubbing negatively influences relationship closeness in married working women and cultivates jealousy feelings. Krasnova et al. (2016) observed similar findings in their study that phubbing triggers jealousy feeling toward their intimate partner and ultimately decreases intimacy among them (Halpern & Katz, 2017). This in turn negatively influences marital relationships among couples, while cumulating conflict and leading to poor relational satisfaction (McDaniel & Coyne, 2016; Roberts & David, 2016).

Conclusion

Based on current findings, it can be concluded that technoference or phubbing significantly influences relationship closeness and jealousy. In the current era of technology, we are so deeply involved in its usage that we negate its negative impact.

Implications

The findings of the study in hand highlight the significance of excessive usage of technology and its influential aspect on relationship quality and cultivating negative emotions. This information is fruitful in understanding the mechanism behind phubbing which acts as a vicious cycle. Moreover, couple therapists can use this information for solving relationship issues between couples.

Limitations and Suggestions

To comprehensively understand the impact of phubbing qualitative research would provide more in-depth information. In the current study, only one gender was targeted. So as to better understand this phenomenon, future studies can focus on both genders.

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