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Impact of Social Media on Phubbing Behavior and Incivility: An Empirical Study

Dr. Shams-ur-Rehman

Lecturer, Department of Media & Communication Studies, Karakoram International University, Gilgit, Pakistan
Correspondence: shams@kiu.edu.pk

Dr. Nazia Rehman

Lecturer, Department of Media & Communication Studies, Rawalpindi Women University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan
Email: nazia.rehman@f.rwu.edu.pk

Dr. Durre Shehwar

Assistant Professor, Department of Arts and Media, Foundation University Islamabad, Pakistan
Email: durreshehwar@fui.edu.pk

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Abstract

Due to the advent of social media, individuals are using it daily to communicate in groups and individually. However, sometimes the content of social media causes stress and as well as phubbing behavior while living in society. This behavior also causes incivil action when addressed. This study intends to examine the role of social media in phubbing behavior and civil actions. A quantitative approach was used to gather the data and data was collected from social media users hence convenience sampling was used. Data was comprised of 212 individuals. Data analysis was conducted through Spss and Amos. The results of the study show the significant impact of social media on phubbing behavior and in civil actions. The study shows that social media has a significant impact on phubbing behavior and incivility in social interactions. Future research should explore the long-term effects of these behaviors and develop strategies to promote healthier social media usage. Interventions, such as educational programs, could help reduce phubbing and incivility. However, the study is limited by its use of convenience sampling, which may not represent the wider population, and self-reported data, which may be biased. Future studies should use more diverse samples and consider qualitative approaches to better understand the causes of these behaviors.

Keywords: Social media, Phubbing behavior, Incivility, Interpersonal communication, Quantitative approach, Convenience sampling, SPSS, AMOS, Social interactions, Behavioral impact.



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Introduction

Since the advent of social media, people have held different attitudes towards different behaviors, even towards phubbing and incivility. Phubbing is a compound expression from the word “phone” and the word “snub”, it is the act of snubbing a person in order to look at or use a Smartphone. However, literature shows that social media did contribute to problematization of proper phubbing behavior: constant social media encouraging people to choose virtual communication over real faces (Rois& Purwani, 2021). Moreover, Fang et al. (2020) found out that in the case of phubbing the fear of missing out (FoMO) and excessive use of social media are the main causes. When people ask for such type of interaction from social media, they are likely to phub more often as they become dependent on their smartphones for social exchanges (Fang et al., 2020). Such behavior has a detrimental effect on social relationships, leading to the feeling of social alienation and decreased connectedness with the people around them (David & Roberts, 2017).

As well as phubbing behaviors, social media has also been associated with an increase in incivility. This is also true for online communication where ‘channels’ without a possibility of identifying addressee typically led to violation of polite behavior. Allusson and Mert (2023) stress that usage of social media provokes participants to behave in an incivil manner that, cumulates as things like cyber harassment, especially in the case where there is technostress. The victims of such incivility are not only the targeted individuals but also the bystanders. This deteriorated diminution of civility causes disengagement from the interactions.

In conclusion, “social media plays a significant role in promoting both phubbing and incivility, with its addictive nature fostering behaviors that diminish the quality of personal interactions and online communication”.

Research Objectives:

1. To analyze the role of social media on phubbing behavior.
2. To examine the role of social media on phubbing behavior.

Literature review

Nazir and Bulut (2019) provided foundational insights into the determinants of phubbing behavior. The authors state that, ramifications of using smart phones especially when in groups compromises interpersonal communication. This results in weaker social bonds and less over all life satisfaction among individuals. They stressed that this behavior is not an individual decision, but rather a reflection of societal culture, most significantly, the influence of social networks. To understand how the behavior affects social activities and interpersonal relationships, the authors analysed phubbing and encouraged further study of its main causes. In the same way, Ang et al. (2019) targeting adolescents aimed at investigating if phubbing affects social connectedness among them. From their study they concluded that the habit of often practicing phubbing lead to poor communication skills and fewer social interactions among youths. The endowed deficiency of social skills poses questions about adolescent growth consequences. The authors call for prevention strategies aimed at healthy use of smartphone and attempting to improve interactions between individuals.

Another study examined the psychological association of phubbing on the life satisfaction and mental distress aspects. The authors pointed out that those who are phubbed or engage in phubbing in their turn tend to be more dissatisfied with their social relationships. Such an emotional impact emphasizes how essential it is to account for psychologic issues in studies assessing the influence of technology on social behavior (Maftei & Măirean, 2023).

Social media has played a crucial role in the upsurge of disrespectful and aggressive behavior termed incivility. Some platforms such as microblogging sites, especially Twitter, indicate high levels of incivility. A similar study by Sun et al. (2021) understood how incivility is affected by the topic of discussion and recorded similar phenomena on Reddit where political topics incited more interactions than non-political or mixed topics (Sun et al., 2021).

Incivility on social media also induces responses on emotions and actions. Kosmidis and Theocharis (2020) for instance, show that if people tend to disagree with the statements voiced out they can be emotionally engaged by viewing the comments made in an uncivil manner, and the danger is greater when people are already inclined to the comments made by a particular side (Kosmidis & Theocharis, 2020). However, it can also instill a sense of dread and this has a negative effect that is by making people refrain from engaging in online discussions. The fear of incivility is cited by Oz (2023) to be a factor of less online engagement. (Oz, 2023)

Moreover, social media use brings about stress which is best termed technostress and this, in turn, makes people more sensitive to attitudes against incivility. Mert et al. (2023) describe that overuse of social media increases technostress and this in turn leads to increased ignorance towards incivilities within personal and professional contexts (Mert et al., 2023)

In conclusion, social media plays a major role in increasing incivility, with its design, user behaviors, and emotional effects contributing to this rise. Addressing these challenges requires finding better ways to reduce the harmful effects of incivility online.

Theoretical framework

This research applies the Social Exchange Theory and the Media Dependency Theory as its theoretical framework which explains how social media impacts phubbing and incivility. The Social Exchange Theory goes further to explain what drives people's interactions with one another stating that it is a cost-benefit issue hence the reason people will go for social media even at the cost of physical interactions. This leads to phubbing when social benefits of online interactions are perceived to be greater than actual investment (Nazir & Bulut, 2019). The Media Dependency Theory considers that people become more and more dependent on different types of media for information, communication, and emotional support resulting in a further promotion of the phubbing and incivility. As social media operates in such manner where people can not physically interact; it magnifies incivility by increasing the dependence of reports on social media for social interaction thus reducing the sense of responsibility for one's actions (Ang et al., 2019; Sun et al., 2021).

Hypotheses:

- There is a significant impact of social media on phubbing behavior.
- There is a significant impact of social media on incivility. make correlation and regression.

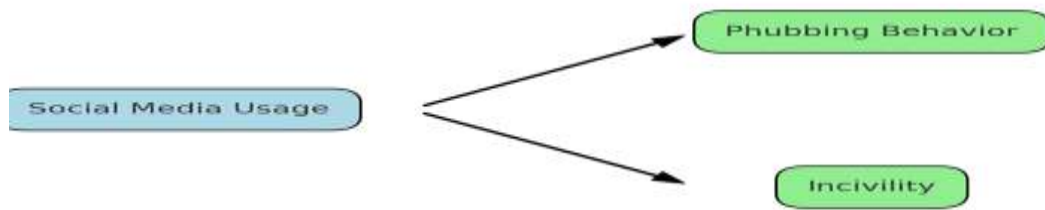


Figure: Research model

Methodology

This study has adopted positive paradigm. Furthermore, the study is empirical in nature and have used survey technique to collect the data. Furthermore, to conduct the survey, structured questionnaires are used that are adapted from previous studies. Sampling techniques for the subjected study is convenient sampling as the data has been collected from social media users and due to the larger population, it was difficult to collect the data from the whole population. Hence, on the basis of convenience of the researcher, convenience sampling technique was used. The total sample size for the study is 212 study is cross sectional in nature and data has been collected at one point of time.

The study employed a structured questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5). The questionnaire comprised three variables: social media usage, phubbing behavior, and incivility. For social media, five items measured the frequency of use and its impact on daily interactions. Phubbing behavior was assessed through five questions examining phone use during face-to-face interactions. Incivility was measured with five items addressing the prevalence of disrespectful behaviors on social media platforms. The questions were adapted from previous studies to ensure reliability and relevance (Nazir & Bulut, 2019; Fang et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2021).

Data Analysis:

The demographic data reveals that the sample consists of 51.9% males and 48.1% females. The majority of respondents (47.2%) are aged 26-35 years, followed by 33% aged 18-25 years. Educationally, 47.2% hold an undergraduate degree, with 29.2% having postgraduate qualifications and 23.6% with high school education.

Table 1: Demographics

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	110	51.9%
	Female	102	48.1%
Age	18-25 years	70	33.0%
	26-35 years	100	47.2%
	36-45 years	42	19.8%
Educational Level	High School	50	23.6%
	Undergraduate	100	47.2%
N=212	Postgraduate	62	29.2%

Table 2: Reliability

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Social Media Usage	0.85
Phubbing Behavior	0.81
Incivility	0.87

This table indicates that all variables—social media usage, phubbing behavior, and incivility—have high reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.81 to 0.87, suggesting good internal consistency of the measurement items.

Table 3: Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Fit Indices	Recommended Value	Observed Value
Chi-Square (χ^2)	$p > 0.05$	0.052
Chi-Square/df (χ^2/df)	≤ 3.00	2.50
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	> 0.90	0.92
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	> 0.90	0.91
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	< 0.08	0.06
Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)	< 0.08	0.05

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis reveal that the overall model is the good fit. χ^2 is however within the permissible limit with a calculated p-value of 0.052 which is greater than the preferred.05. The χ^2/df is equal to 2.50, which is a satisfactory level, as the value of 3.0 is

considered the upper limit for an adequate model. Comparative Fit Index (CFI) is 0.92 and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) is 0.91 which is greater than 0.90 indicating good model fit. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.06, making a reasonable approximation of the model good enough with cut-off of 0.08. Finally, the goodness of fit is tested with establishing the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) which is 0.05 is a perfect range for a good fit.

In conclusion, the CFA results show that the hypothesized measurement model has a good fit to the observed data, indicating that the variables (social media usage, phubbing behavior, and incivility) are well represented by the model.

Table 4: Validity

Variable	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Composite Reliability (CR)
Social Media Usage	0.55	0.85
Phubbing Behavior	0.60	0.83
Incivility	0.57	0.88

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is a measure calculated to show the extent to which a set of indicators is ‘connected’ to a construct, using the error that occurs during measurement. AVE has been usually set to a range of 0.5 or above because if the value of AVE is 0.50 and above, then the research constructs will retain enough information on that particular construct. For instance, the AVE for construct, Social Media Usage, is 0.55 suggesting that more than 55% of the variance of its indicators is accounted for by this construct. The convergent validity of the scale is further confirmed by the results that Phubbing Behavior with an AVE of 0.60, and Incivility with an AVE of 0.57.

Composite Reliability (CR) specifies the general reliability of the items measuring the construct, with a threshold of 0.70 or higher suggesting good reliability. Social Media Usage has a CR of 0.85, showing strong internal consistency. Phubbing Behavior has a CR of 0.83, also reflecting strong reliability. Incivility has the highest CR at 0.88, indicating excellent reliability.

In summary, all constructs demonstrate good convergent validity and strong internal consistency, as shown by the AVE and CR values.

Table 5: Correlation Table

Variables	Social Media Usage	Phubbing Behavior	Incivility
Social Media Usage	1.00	0.65**	0.60**
Phubbing Behavior	0.65**	1.00	0.50**
Incivility	0.60**	0.50**	1.00

There exists a relatively marked positive correlation ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$) with ‘social media usage’ and phubbing behavior of individuals, which indicates that with an increase in “social media interaction”, “phubbing behavior” also increases. **A moderate positive correlation** ($r = 0.60$, $p < 0.01$) was also found between social media usage and incivility that shows that if social media usage is higher than incivility will also be higher. The relationship between phubbing behavior and incivility is also positive ($r = 0.50$, $p < 0.01$), but it is less strong than the other two relationships.

Table 6: Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	R ²
Phubbing Behavior	Social Media Usage	0.65	8.25	< 0.001	0.42
Incivility	Social Media Usage	0.60	7.20	< 0.001	0.36

The regression results show that social media usage has a **significant positive impact** on phubbing behavior, with a beta coefficient (β) of 0.65, indicating that a one-unit increase in social media usage leads to a 0.65 increase in phubbing behavior. The model explains 42% of the variance in phubbing behavior (**R² = 0.42**). Similarly, social media usage has a **significant positive impact** on incivility, with a beta coefficient (β) of 0.60, showing that a one-unit increase in social media usage results in a 0.60 increase in incivility. The model explains 36% of the variance in incivility (**R² = 0.36**).

In conclusion, social media usage significantly impacts both phubbing behavior and incivility, supporting the proposed hypotheses. The relationships are positive, with substantial portions of the variance explained by the regression models.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study demonstrate that social media usage has a significant positive impact on both phubbing behavior and incivility. As shown in the regression analysis, social media usage significantly predicts phubbing behavior ($\beta = 0.65$, $p < 0.001$) and explains 42% of the variance in this behavior. Similarly, social media usage is a significant predictor of incivility ($\beta = 0.60$, $p < 0.001$), accounting for 36% of the variance in incivility. These findings align with previous research, which suggests that the constant connectivity enabled by social media encourages individuals to prioritize virtual interactions over face-to-face communication, leading to phubbing behavior (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018).

The connection between the use of social media and the practice among individuals that concerns the deliberate ignoring of a person and its other implications has been corroborated by various studies such as that of Roberts and David (2016) who suggested that phubbing deals enhanced with social media usage and addiction to smartphones. These behaviors lead to lower communication efficiency as well as satisfaction with interpersonal relations particularly within relationships that are close one. Phubbing has been proven to cause weakness of social bonds and people feel neglected and excluded socially. (Karadağ et al, 2015).

The incivility findings have some connection to previous work, with social media platforms that have an anonymous or quasi-anonymous feature encouraging aggressive and rude behavior. Suler (2004), however, points out that being anonymous and without accountability in person present opportunities to take part in uncivil communication. This research complements previous findings by Oz et al. (2018; p. 156), who demonstrated that social media users are more likely to reveal hostility in an online setting due to the lack of immediacy and severity of consequences to incivility compared to face to face. Also, the notion of technostress — stress generated by over use of technology — is very important in relation to development phubbing and to incivility. Studies from previous years have found that technostress results in negative psychological results including helping to peak frustration and aggressive behavior on the internet (Ayyagari, Grover, & Purvis, 2011). Currently, the current study shows that this stress, combined with the emotional

detachment that comes from online communication, escalates uncivil behavior. On the other hand, there is a positive relationship between the use of social media and incivility, which corroborates to finding by Gervais (2015) that social media is often used as an outlet for hostile attitudes that people avoid expressing in face to face exchanges. This body of literature is augmented with the current results, which help demonstrate how habitual social media usage predicts an increase in both disrespectful and aggressive behavior online.

Conclusion

The study's results reinforce the significant impact of social media usage on phubbing behavior and incivility. The constant connectivity offered by social media platforms encourages users to prioritize online communication over face-to-face interactions, leading to phubbing, while the anonymity and emotional distance of social media environments promote uncivil behavior. These findings suggest the need for strategies to mitigate the negative effects of social media on interpersonal communication and online discourse.

Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the use of **self-reported questionnaires** may introduce **response bias**, as participants could overestimate or underestimate their social media usage and phubbing behavior. Second, the study's **cross-sectional design** prevents the establishment of causal relationships between social media usage, phubbing, and incivility. Longitudinal or experimental designs would provide stronger evidence of causality. Additionally, the study focused on a **convenient sample of social media users**, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader populations or to specific demographic groups.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should address the limitations by employing **longitudinal designs** to explore the long-term effects of social media on phubbing behavior and incivility. Studies using **experimental methods** could also help determine the causal relationships between variables. Additionally, future research could examine the impact of different **types of social media platforms** (e.g., Twitter, Instagram, Facebook) on phubbing and incivility to better understand how platform-specific features influence user behavior. Finally, including **diverse demographic groups** would enhance the generalizability of the findings across different cultures, age groups, and education levels.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have important **theoretical, practical, and societal implications**. Theoretically, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how **Social Exchange Theory** and **Media Dependency Theory** explain the influence of social media on negative behaviors such as phubbing and incivility. Practically, the results suggest that **social media platforms** and **technology developers** need to be mindful of the addictive nature of their platforms and consider strategies to reduce the negative impacts, such as implementing features that encourage **digital well-being** (e.g., notifications limiting usage time). From a societal perspective, **educators and policymakers** should promote **awareness campaigns** and **interventions** aimed at reducing phubbing and encouraging civil online behavior, particularly among younger generations. By addressing these challenges, society can work toward fostering healthier interpersonal and online communication environments.

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