

Maternal Phubbing and Mother - Child Relationship

Elizabeth Varkey¹, Manju Micle², Sushmi MS³, Shiji P⁴

Abstract

A study was conducted among children between 10-16 years of age and their mothers attending a selected hospital in Kozhikode (Kerala) to assess the maternal phubbing of children, assess the mother-child relationship and test the association between maternal phubbing and mother-child relationship. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted among 50 mothers and children attending IPD and OPD of Paediatric Department of Baby Memorial Hospital, Kozhikode; the samples were selected using purposive sampling technique. The results of the study revealed that that majority (70%) of mothers were having mild phubbing and 88 percent of the subjects exhibited closeness in the relationship with their child. It was also revealed that there exists a negative correlation between maternal phubbing and closeness ('r' value-0.392) and a positive correlation between maternal phubbing and conflict ('r' value 0.644).

Key words: Maternal phubbing, mother child relationship, closeness, conflict

The new era of advanced technology has reached its brim of excellence with the advent of mobile phones and its uses in all walks of life. It has become an important part of everyone's pocket for easy accessibility to the entire world at one's finger tips. The use of mobile phones has made communication easy and fast along with many advantages thereby eclipsing some silent disadvantages especially when we look on to the quality of relationships.

Phubbing is a new brand expression describing the act of snubbing someone in a social gathering by not paying attention to them, and instead looking at one's own phone. Now-a-days this has become an overwhelming issue in all areas and levels of life, for instance in academics, relationships, family etc. A decline in parent-child relationship satisfaction could be found out due to this parental phubbing. Parental phubbing is referred to as the extent to which a parent uses or is distracted by his/her cell phone while being with their child or family (Uzelac et al, 2015). Quite a few studies have researched on this area of parental phubbing and its impact on the children. All these conditions reinforce that it is high time for digital detox (misuse of mobile phones and phubbing (Ugur & Koe, 2015).

The present era of advanced technology has changed the face of the entire globe as well as the people living in it. The advent of smartphone is a boon which has

made life easier, the whole world in the finger tips and in pockets. Social media is being more intertwined in our lives and relationships. The opportunity to connect with families living thousands of miles apart to share experiences is just one example of the positive impact of platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp. However, social media has created a whole new type of risk to positive relationships especially in children.

In recent years, there has been an explosion of smartphone use in every family life. Smartphones are becoming an integral part of lives of all ages worldwide (Kauffman & Riggins, 2012). People tend to prefer smartphones to computers when surfing online and feel inseparable from their smartphone (Pancani et al, 2020). For instance, as of 2015, 18.21 percent of India's overall populations owned a smartphone. Smartphones offer us unrestricted connectivity to our special networks and bring positive results to our social lives. However, having a fulltime connection to personal networks may also cause relational damage (Niu et al, 2020; Richter et al, 2018). For instance, the quality of people's proximal interactions may become lower, as people become less involved in co-present interactions due to their simultaneous engagement in online interactions on their smartphones. The use of smart phone has increased the dependency to such a height resulting in people engaging with their smartphones even while having a face to face conversation with others, a behaviour commonly known in the literatures as phubbing.

'Phubbing' (short for "phone snubbing") is a term coined to capture the practice of ignoring the person

The authors are: 1. Deputy Chief Nursing Officer & Head; 2 & 3. Assistant Professor; and 4. Lecturer, all at Department of Child Health Nursing, Baby Memorial College of Nursing, Kozhikode (Kerala).

you are with by paying more attention to your phone than to them (Uzelac et al, 2015). The person engaging with a smartphone instead of another person during a social interaction is called a 'phubber', while the person who is/are being phubbed or the phone snubbed during social interaction is called the 'phubbee(s)'. Phubbing behaviour has become a normal part of everyday interactions and communications (Ugur & Koc, 2015). This behaviour has impacted on people especially on parent-child relationships. Phubbing is a portmanteau of the words, phone and snubbing, when it occurs between parents and children it is called 'parental phubbing' (partner-phone-snubbing). To be phubbed is to be ignored or snubbed by a person in one's company in preference for their smart phone device. A simple example of phubbing is answering the phone or responding to texts while in mid conversation with the child or scrolling through a social media app such as Facebook or WhatsApp while a significant other is attempting to converse and/or connect. This type of behaviour resembles that of those avoiding listening to other while reading a book. Given the ubiquitous nature of smartphone, partner phubbing is common with more than 70 percent of a sample of 143 married / cohabiting women reported so.

From the perspective of social learning theory, parental phubbing has an impact on teenagers' mobile phone dependency behaviours. Bandura's social learning theory emphasised that all individuals experience the effects of social environments. Family, especially parents, are an irreplaceable part of a child's life and exert a considerable influence on perceived social surroundings, inner cognition, and daily behaviours (Xie et al, 2019). One study highlighted that most students in middle school experience a vulnerable period in their lives during which they are prone to develop maladaptive habits due to lack of insight regarding the potential risks and consequences of those behaviours. They might model parents' maladaptive behaviours, such as excessive smoking and drinking, especially if they view those behaviours as normal (Hong et al, 2019).

Despite obvious benefits of smartphones, their potential adverse effects such as addiction in the form of nomophobia, Internet addiction, and social media addictions of Facebook and WhatsApp are issues on the increase in developing countries where the number of smartphone users is rising. Many people in developing countries including India are now showing signs of addiction to the Internet with potential consequence. Higher levels of media use through smartphones and technology increased distractions among families (especially during meal times) by reducing family communication and putting less importance on mealtimes. There is a growing unease that smartphones may actually create a form of misuse or overuse resulting in problematic Internet usage, generating a new problem known as 'Phubbing' rather than a means of enhancing social interactions (Xiao & Zheng, 2022).

The problematic misuse of smartphones by parents and caretakers is adversely affecting the lives of children. Anticipatory guidance from paediatric nurses is a valuable intervention that can provide insight to caregivers on the potential negative consequences of parental-caretaker phubbing on children. This study aims to inform the importance of parental self-monitoring and control of their smartphone use and identify paediatric nurses' approaches to guide parents and families to prevent adverse outcomes for this emerging public health problem.

Review of Literature

In a study on prevalence of perceived phubbing on a stratified sample of 3,289 adolescents, Pancani et al (2020) showed a positive relationship between children's perceived levels of mother phubbing and their feelings of social disconnection with parents, thus suggesting that the more children felt that one or both of their parents were phubbing them, the less the children felt connected with their parents.

Niu et al (2020) examined the association between mother phubbing and adolescent problematic mobile phone use and its underlying mechanism. A sample of 726 Chinese adolescents was recruited to complete measures on mother phubbing, mother-child relationship, self-control, and problematic mobile phone use. The results indicated that mother-child relationship partially mediated the association between mother phubbing and adolescent problematic mobile phone use. Both the direct association between mother phubbing and adolescent problematic mobile phone use and the mediating effect of mother-child relationship were moderated by self-control; both these two effects were stronger for individuals with low level of self-control. These findings deepened the understanding of the risk factors of adolescent problematic mobile phone use and influences on adolescents.

Xie et al (2019) aimed to determine if adolescents' mobile phone addiction increases after being phubbed by parents, and examine effects of the mediating roles of mother-child attachment, deviant peer affiliation, and moderating role of gender. The study sample comprised 1007 adolescents (518 girls and 489 boys). Multivariable regression with bootstrap sampling was executed to test the moderated mediation. Results revealed that parents' phubbing was positively related to adolescents' mobile phone addiction ($\beta=0.30$, $p<0.001$). Mother-child attachment and deviant peers was found to mediate the relationship between parents' phubbing, and adolescents' mobile phone addiction; while gender was found to moderate the indirect effect of parents' phubbing on mobile phone addiction through deviant peers; the indirect effect was stronger for boys than for girls showing that parents' phubbing is a risk factor for mobile phone addiction.

A study on mother phubbing and adolescent

loneliness among 3923 senior high school students from China who completed measurements regarding demographic variables, mother phubbing, mother-adolescent communication (MAC), perceived mother acceptance (PMA) and loneliness indicated that maternal phubbing was positively correlated with loneliness in adolescents and MAC and PMA mediated the relationship between maternal phubbing and adolescence loneliness sequentially (Wang et al, 2019).

This study assessed maternal phubbing and mother-child relationship among children between 10-16 years of age and their mothers attending a selected hospital, Kozhikode (Kerala).

Objectives

- To assess the maternal phubbing of children
- To assess the mother- child relationship
- To test the association between maternal phubbing and mother-child relationship

Hypothesis

H1: There is significant association between maternal phubbing and mother-child relationship at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of subjects based on demographic characteristics (n=50)

Sample characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	28	56
Female	22	44
Age of the child in completed years		
10-12	19	38
12-14	16	32
14-16	15	30
Age of the mother in completed years		
25-35	18	36
35-45	27	54
45-55	5	10
Education of the mother		
Illiterate	0	0
School	19	38
Collegiate	25	50
Professional	6	12
Occupation of the mother		
Home maker	26	52
Self employed	2	4
Private employee	16	32
Government employee	6	12
Number of children		
1	7	14
2	35	70
3	5	10
More than 3	3	6
Type of family		
Nuclear family	41	82
Joint family	8	16
Extended family	1	2

Methodology

A non-experimental descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted among 50 mothers and children (aged 10-16 years) and selected using purposive sampling technique. The inclusion criteria was children who are attending IPD and OPD of Baby Memorial Hospital, Kozhikode with their mothers, who are using mobile phones and who were willing to participate in the study. Children with congenital anomalies, any disabilities, chronic illness and who are critically ill and admitted in ICU were excluded. The tools used were questionnaire to assess socio personal data, modified Robert and David's Partner Phubbing scale to measure maternal phubbing and Robert C. Pianta's Child parent Relationship scale to assess mother-child relationship. Prior to data collection ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee. Permission from concerned authorities and informed consent was taken from the subjects. Data collection was done from 1 September to 30 September 2021. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results

Majority of the children (56%) were males, most of them (38%) were within the age group of 10 - 12 years, more than half of the mothers (54%) were in the age group 35-45 years, half of the mothers (50%) were graduates and majority of the mothers (52%) were home makers (Table 1). Most of the children (70%) belonged to second birth order and majority (82%) were from nuclear family.

Table 2 reveals that majority of mothers (70%) were having mild phubbing. Most subjects (88%) exhibited closeness in mother child relationship (Table 3). Table 4 shows that there is a negative correlation between maternal phubbing and closeness and a positive correlation between maternal phubbing and conflict.

Discussion

The present study reveals that there is a negative correlation between maternal phubbing and closeness and a positive correlation between maternal phubbing and conflict. The findings are consistent with a study (Parents' Phubbing and Problematic Mobile Phone Use: The Roles of the Parent-Child Relationship and Children's Self-Esteem) conducted among 1721 secondary students from three regular schools in Hunan Province and Beijing, China. The results revealed that parents' phubbing, the parent-child relationship, children's self-esteem, and children's PMPU were correlated with each other (r ranging from 0.14 to 0.40) (Hong et al, 2019). Another study conducted to identify the prevalence of perceived phubbing on a stratified sample of 3,289 adolescents also showed a positive relationship between children's perceived levels of mother phubbing and their feelings of social disconnection with parents,

Table 2: Frequency and percentage distribution of maternal phubbing (n=50)

Maternal phubbing	Frequency	Percentage
No phubbing	4	8
Mild phubbing	35	70
Moderate phubbing	11	22
Severe phubbing	0	0

thus suggesting that the more children felt that one or both of their parents were phubbing them, the less the children felt connected with their parents (Pancani et al, 2020).

Study Implications

Nursing education: Nurse educators can stress upon conducting health education and awareness programmes to improve mother-child relationship.

Nursing administration: Administrative support should be provided to the staff nurses as well as nurse educators to implement health education and awareness programme for improving mother child relationship

Nursing practice: In clinical settings nurses can take the initiative to assess extend of maternal phubbing and provide education regarding the problems of maternal phubbing.

Nursing research: The nurse researchers can conduct the study in wider population setting and could use the finding from the study in a community setting.

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Conclusion

The quality of parent-child relationship has endured

Table 3: Frequency and percentage distribution of Mother-child relationship (n=50)

Mother - child relationship	Frequency	Percentage
Closeness		
Yes	44	88
No	6	12
Conflict		
Yes	0	0
No	50	100

Table 4: Relationship between maternal phubbing and mother-child relationship

Variable	r value	p value
Maternal phubbing and closeness	-0.392	0.005*
Maternal phubbing and conflict	0.644	0.000*

* Significant at 0.05 level.

as the paramount factor in child development. Problematic misuse of smart phones by parents and care takers are adversely affecting the lives of the children. Emerging research non-parental phubbing shows less coordination in parenting and co parenting and dissatisfaction with the time spent together. Paediatric nurses have an integral role in addressing the challenge for parents, care takers and families to avoid phubbing by shifting their focus away from technology back to their children.

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