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Present Yet Distracted: Relationship between Phubbing and Mindfulness among Young Adults in India

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ABSTRACT

Have you ever been talking to someone but ended up checking your phone instead of listening to them? This everyday behaviour is commonly referred to as phubbing (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016) and this has become increasingly common with the growing role of smartphones in young adults' lives. While smartphone provide constant connection and convenience, they may also interfere with our ability to stay present in real-life interactions. One psychological factor that may be related to this behaviour is mindfulness which is the ability to remain aware and attentive to the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Although previous research has examined phubbing in association with various psychological and interpersonal factors, relatively limited research has investigated it's association with mindfulness among young adults, particularly within the Indian context. Thus, the present study aimed to examine the relationship between phubbing and mindfulness among young adults in India. A correlational research design was used to see whether mindfulness is related to phubbing behaviour by using purposive sampling. Participants were assessed using the Phubbing Scale developed by Karadağ et al., 2015 and Mindful Attention Awareness Scale developed by Brown and Ryan, 2003. The findings revealed a

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significant moderate negative relationship between phubbing and mindfulness (r= -.52, p< .001) indicating that possibly higher levels of phubbing were associated with lower levels of mindfulness. These findings highlight how our ability to remain attentive to the present moment may be connected to the way we engage with smartphones during social interactions. By exploring this relationship in the Indian context, the study contributes to a better understanding of how everyday smartphone behaviours may intersect with psychological functioning and interpersonal experiences.

Phubbing and Mindfulness among Young Adults in India: A Correlational Study

The increasing use of smartphones has significantly influenced how young adults communicate, socialize and engage with their surroundings (Wilmer et al., 2017). Although smartphones are useful but excessive and inappropriate use can sometimes affect face to face interactions and reduce their attention towards people around them (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2013). One behaviour that has developed with increased smartphone use is phubbing, that refers to a situation in which a person pays attention to or uses their smartphone instead of giving attention to someone who is physically present during an interaction. In this way, the phone becomes a source of distraction and may interfere with communication and interpersonal relationships (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016). Another concept that may be related to phubbing is mindfulness. Mindfulness involves intentionally focusing one's attention on the present moment while maintaining an open and non-judgemental attitude, it includes being aware of one's thoughts, feelings, answer rounding rather than reacting automatically to them (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

Recent research has specifically examined the connection between mindfulness and phubbing. For instance, Xu et al. (2026) conducted a study which indicated that greater mindfulness was associated with lower levels of phubbing, and in addition, attentional control and the impulsive system partially explained the relationship between mindfulness and phubbing. This suggests that being more mindful may help individuals manage their attention and control the urge to check their smartphones during social situations. These findings provide longitudinal evidence that mindfulness may act as a protective factor against phubbing among young adults. Likewise, Gao et al. (2023) investigated the factors associated with phubbing in China, with particular attention to fear of missing out (FOMO) and mindfulness. The study indicated that higher levels of FOMO were associated with greater engagement in phubbing, whereas mindfulness showed a negative association with phubbing behaviour. Further, mindfulness moderated the

relationship between FOMO and phubbing, suggesting that mindfulness may influence how FOMO contributes to phubbing. These findings indicate that greater awareness of the present moment may help individuals regulate their attention and reduce excessive smartphone use during face-to-face social interactions. Further supporting the role of psychological factors in phubbing, Ahmed et al. (2023) investigated how excessive dependence on smartphones may be associated with phubbing in Turkey. Alongside examining smartphone addiction and phubbing, the researchers explored mindfulness as a potential moderating factor in this relationship. The results demonstrated that greater smartphone addiction was significantly associated with a higher tendency to engage in phubbing, suggesting that problematic smartphone use may interfere with individuals' involvement in direct social interactions. The inclusion of mindfulness in the study reflects the importance of examining personal psychological factors that may shape smartphone-related behaviour. Overall, the study provides insight into how patterns of excessive smartphone use can be linked to reduced engagement with others during face-to-face communication.

Previous studies have consistently highlighted a significant relationship between mindfulness and phubbing behaviour as if (Gao et al., 2023), found that mindfulness was negatively associated with phubbing and could influence the relationship between FOMO and phubbing. Also, (Ahmed et al., 2023) examined mindfulness as a moderator of the relationship between smartphone addiction and phubbing. Further, most research has been conducted outside India, including studies from China (Xu et al., 2026) and Turkey (Ahmed et al., 2023) and there is still scarcity of research on the relationship between mindfulness and phubbing among young adults in India. As smartphones have become an important part of young adult's everyday lives therefore, it is important to understand how mindfulness maybe related to phubbing behaviour in the Indian context.

Method

Sample

The present study included 100 young adults between 18 to 25 years of age range. The study included a purposive sampling technique, as individuals who met the predetermined eligibility criteria were approached and invited to participate in the study.

Inclusion Criteria. Individuals were included in the study who fulfilled the age criteria between 18 to 25 years and who were literate or able to understand and respond to the questionnaire items independently. English proficiency was required to fill the forms and participants residing in the Delhi-NCR region were included in the study.

Exclusion Criteria. Individuals were excluded from the study who were below 18 and above 25 years of age and who were illiterate or unable to understand and respond to the questionnaire items.

Instruments

The participants were asked to complete two standardized self report questionnaires:

The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS). It was developed by Brown and Ryan (2003) is a standardized 15-item self-report measure used to assess an individual's dispositional mindfulness, particularly awareness and attention to present-moment experiences. The items are rated on a 6-point Likert Scale, ranging from 1=almost always to 6= almost never, with higher scores indicating greater mindfulness. The scale has demonstrated good psychometric properties, with internal consistency reliability ranging from $\alpha = .82$ to .87 and a test–retest reliability coefficient of .81. Evidence supports its convergent, discriminant, and construct validity, and factor-analytic studies have confirmed its one-factor structure.

The Phubbing Scale (PS). It was developed by Karadağ et al. (2015) is a standardized instrument designed to measure phubbing behavior. It consists of 10 items, rated on a 5- point Likert Scale ranging from 1= never to 5= always. The scale has shown good reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .87 for the Communication Disturbance dimension and .85 for the Phone Obsession dimension. Its validity has been established through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, supporting its construct validity and two-factor structure. The scale has also been validated across different cultural settings, demonstrating satisfactory psychometric properties.

Research Design

The present study employed a quantitative, correlational research design to examine the relationship between Mindfulness and Phubbing among young adults.

Procedure

Participants aged 18-25 years who met the inclusion criteria were approached to take part in the study. They were informed that their participation was voluntary. They were also assured that the information provided by them would be kept confidential and used only for academic and research purposes. After obtaining their consent, they were asked to complete the Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) and the Pubbing Scale. The questionnaires were completed individually, with clear instructions provided to ensure that participants understood how to respond. They were encouraged to answer honestly and based on their everyday experiences. They were allowed sufficient time to complete

both questionnaires and any queries regarding the instructions were clarified without influencing their responses. After completing the questionnaires, responses were collected. The data obtained from all 100 participants were then organised and prepared for statistical analysis to examine the relationship between mindfulness and phubbing among young adults in India.

Analysis

The collected data was analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics, to examine the relationship between mindfulness and phubbing among young adults in India.

Results

Table 1 *Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables*

Variable	*N*	*M*	*SD*	1	2
Phubbing	100	31.42	9.56	-	
Mindfulness	100	46.92	15.22	-0.52***	-

****p*< .001

The table 1 shows a moderately significant negative relationship between phubbing and mindfulness, r(98) = -.52, p< .001 which signifies that it is likely that participants who reported more phubbing behaviour generally tended to report lower levels of mindfulness. Similarly, participants with higher mindfulness scores tended to report lower levels of phubbing. Descriptive statistics were calculated to examine the levels of phubbing and mindfulness among the participants. The sample consisted of 100 participants. The study indicate that the mean score for phubbing was 31.42 (SD= 9.56), with scores ranging from 10 to 50. The mean mindfulness score was 46.92 (SD= 15.22), with the scores ranging from 15 to 87. To understand the relationship between two variables, a Pearson Correlation Analysis was conducted.

The strength of the correlation suggests that the relationship between the two variables was moderate. However, it is important to note that the study used a correlational analysis, so the results show an association between the variables rather than demonstrating that one variable causes change in the other.

Discussion

The present study was conducted to examine the relationship between mindfulness and phubbing among young adults in India. The study included a sample of 100 participants. The main purpose was to understand whether the level of mindfulness was related to the tendency to engage in phubbing behaviour.

The findings showed a significant negative relationship between mindfulness and phubbing, $r(98) = -.52$, $p < .001$. The mean score for phubbing was 31.42 (SD = 9.56), whereas the mean score for mindfulness was 46.92 (SD = 15.22). This means that participants who reported higher levels of mindfulness generally tended to report lower levels of phubbing. The relationship was moderate in strength, suggesting that mindfulness is meaningfully related to phubbing, although other factors may also be involved. Since the correlation was statistically significant, the finding supports the hypothesis that mindfulness and phubbing are negatively related.

The present findings are similar to the findings reported by Xu et al. (2026), who found that greater mindfulness was associated with lower levels of phubbing. Their study also suggested that attentional control and the impulsive system partly explain the relationship between mindfulness and phubbing. Similarly, Gao et al. (2023) found that mindfulness was negatively associated with phubbing and also played a role in the relationship between fear of missing out (FOMO) and phubbing. These findings are consistent with the present study and suggest that greater awareness of one's thoughts, attention, and present surroundings maybe associated to lower levels of phubbing behaviour. However, the findings are not completely consistent across all previous research as Ahmed et al. (2023), found a significant relationship between smartphone addiction and phubbing, but did not find a significant direct relationship between mindfulness and phubbing. Instead, mindfulness acted as a moderating factor. This difference may be because of variations in the participants, cultural background, research design, or the way the variables were measured.

Therefore, while the present findings provide useful insight into the relationship between mindfulness and phubbing, they should also be understood in light of certain limitations. The study was conducted with the sample of 100 participants, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to a larger population. In addition to this the study used the correlational design; therefore, it cannot establish whether mindfulness actually causes changes in phubbing behaviour. Despite these limitations, the findings have useful implications for psychology, particularly in understanding smartphone related behaviour among young adults. The results suggest that mindfulness maybe an important psychological factor to consider when studying phubbing. Future researchers could examine other factors such as FOMO, smartphone

addiction, self control, and attentional control. They could also use larger samples and longitudinal or experimental designs. Such research may provide a clear understanding of how mindfulness and smartphone- related behaviour are connected particularly among young adults.

Conclusion

The present study examined the relationship between mindfulness and phubbing behaviour among young adults in India. The findings showed a significant negative relationship between the two variables, indicating that participants with higher level of mindfulness show lower levels of phubbing behaviour. This suggests that being more aware of one's thoughts, attention, and present moment may be linked with more attentive behaviour during social interactions. However, the findings should be considered in light of the study's sample size and correlational design. Therefore, the results cannot be generalised to all young adults, and a cause-and- effect relationship cannot be established. Future studies could use larger and more diverse samples and examine additional factors such as smartphone addiction, FOMO, self-control or attentional control. Longitudinal or experimental research could also provide a better understanding of how mindfulness and smartphone- related behaviours are connected. In conclusion, the study contributes to the understanding of mindfulness and phubbing among young adults and provides a basis of further research, particularly in the Indian context.

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