

Impact of Perceived Phubbing on Emotional Regulation and Fomo Among Young Adults in India

Yugam Aggarwal¹, Dr Tamanna Saxena²

¹Student, Amity University, Noida

²Assistant Professor, Amity University, Noida

Abstract

Phubbing—the act of ignoring someone in favor of using a smartphone—has emerged as a prevalent issue in digital-age interpersonal communication. This study examined the impact of perceived phubbing on fear of missing out (FoMO) and emotion regulation strategies, specifically cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression, among young adults in India. A sample of 213 college students completed the Generic Scale of Phubbing (GSP), the Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMOS), and the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ). Data were analyzed using Pearson's correlation and simple linear regression. Results revealed a significant positive correlation between perceived phubbing and FoMO, $r = .184$, $p < .01$, indicating that individuals who reported higher levels of phubbing also experienced greater FoMO. However, no significant relationships were observed between phubbing and emotion regulation strategies—cognitive reappraisal ($r = .037$, $p = .587$) and expressive suppression ($r = .036$, $p = .595$)—nor between these strategies and FoMO. Regression analysis confirmed that perceived phubbing significantly predicted FoMO ($\beta = .184$, $p = .007$), but not emotion regulation components. These findings suggest that perceived social exclusion via phubbing increases vulnerability to FoMO but does not significantly impact emotion regulation abilities. Interventions aimed at reducing FoMO may benefit from focusing on improving social presence and digital etiquette rather than solely on internal emotional coping mechanisms.

Keywords: perceived phubbing, fear of missing out, emotion regulation, cognitive reappraisal, expressive suppression

1. Introduction

In the current digital age, mobile phones and social media platforms have redefined the very fabric of human communication. With the widespread use of smartphones, individuals can now engage with others from virtually any location and at any time.

These tools have revolutionized social interaction, providing unprecedented access to information, entertainment, and connection. However, with this evolution has also come a new set of interpersonal and psychological challenges. While digital devices are designed to enhance communication, they can paradoxically contribute to a decline in the quality of in-person interactions. One such emerging behavior is phubbing—a blend of the words “phone” and “snubbing”—which describes the act of ignoring someone in a social setting by paying attention to one's mobile phone instead (Roberts & David, 2016).

Though phubbing may appear subtle or habitual, its impact on relationships and mental well-being can be profound. The very act of being “phubbed” communicates a lack of presence, interest, or value in the ongoing face-to-face interaction, and for many, this can feel like a form of social exclusion. Over time, repeated experiences of being phubbed may contribute to strained relationships, reduced self-worth, and increased stress, particularly in socially sensitive individuals.

A related concept that has drawn increasing scholarly attention is perceived phubbing, which centers not on the behavior itself but on the subjective experience of being ignored in favor of a digital device. Perceived phubbing is important because perception itself often governs emotional and cognitive responses, regardless of intent. A person may not intend to cause harm by checking their phone during a conversation, but if the other party feels dismissed or devalued, the psychological effects may still occur.

1.1 Relevance in Indian Sociocultural Context

India, with its collectivistic cultural roots, places a high value on interpersonal relationships, familial closeness, and social harmony. Face-to-face communication and traditional interaction norms hold significant cultural importance, particularly among the younger population who straddle both modern digital environments and traditional social values. In this context, perceived phubbing could have a heightened emotional impact, especially for young adults who are navigating complex social relationships, academic responsibilities, and the search for identity and belonging. Young adults in India are also among the most active users of smartphones and social media. According to various national reports, platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, and Facebook are heavily used by individuals aged 18 to 30. This makes them particularly susceptible to both engaging in and being affected by phubbing behavior. When a peer or loved one frequently checks their phone during shared moments, it may signal, even unintentionally, that the virtual world takes precedence over the real one—potentially leading to emotional disconnection and distress.

1.2 Emotional Regulation and its Importance

Emotional regulation is a crucial psychological process that enables individuals to monitor, assess, and modify their emotional reactions in a manner that is adaptive and contextually appropriate. Gross (1998) defined it as the set of processes by which people influence their own emotions: how they experience them and how they express them.

Emotional regulation plays an essential role in overall mental health, coping ability, academic performance, and interpersonal relationships.

Two major strategies of emotion regulation have been widely studied: Cognitive Reappraisal, which involves changing the way one thinks about a situation to alter its emotional impact, and Expressive Suppression, which involves inhibiting the outward display of emotions. These strategies are not merely coping mechanisms but are foundational to how individuals interpret and manage social situations.

When individuals experience perceived phubbing, especially on a frequent basis, they may develop feelings of frustration, loneliness, or rejection. These emotional responses can become difficult to regulate over time, especially if the individual lacks adequate coping mechanisms or social support. Persistent experiences of phubbing may lead to emotional dysregulation, which in turn can contribute to other psychological issues such as anxiety, depressive symptoms, or social withdrawal.

1.3 The Phenomenon of FoMO (Fear of Missing Out)

Alongside phubbing and emotional regulation, another growing concern among young adults is Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). Coined by Przybylski et al. (2013), FoMO is defined as a pervasive apprehension

that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent. It is closely linked to the use of social media platforms where users are constantly exposed to curated, highlight-reel versions of their peers' lives. This exposure often leads to social comparison, dissatisfaction, and the compulsive need to remain digitally connected.

FoMO can significantly disrupt an individual's mental well-being by fostering constant comparison, anxiety, and a diminished sense of self-worth. Moreover, it often leads to compulsive behaviors such as excessive social media checking, fear of being left out of social groups, and difficulty in disconnecting from digital platforms. When individuals perceive that they are being phubbed, they may experience heightened FoMO—believing that the person ignoring them is engaged in something more exciting, interesting, or socially fulfilling. This could further reinforce the cycle of digital dependency and psychological distress.

1.4 The Present Study

The current study examines the interrelated roles of perceived phubbing, emotion regulation, and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) among young Indian adults. Perceived phubbing, experienced as social neglect or exclusion, may impair individuals' ability to regulate emotions—especially through cognitive reappraisal or expressive suppression—which could, in turn, heighten vulnerability to FoMO as individuals seek connection or distraction via digital means.

While each of these constructs has been explored independently, there is limited research investigating their combined dynamics, particularly in non-Western contexts. Existing studies often focus on Western samples and rarely address *perceived* phubbing specifically. This study addresses that gap by contextualizing these interactions within the Indian sociocultural setting.

By exploring how emotional regulation may mediate or moderate the relationship between perceived phubbing and FoMO, this research aims to advance understanding of the psychological impacts of digital behavior. Its findings can inform interventions and digital wellness strategies tailored to Indian youth.

2. Review of Literature

Halimatuszahro et al. (2025) found that among high school students, avoidant attachment positively predicted phubbing behavior, while self-regulation had a negative effect. This suggests that emotionally distant adolescents with low self-control are more likely to ignore others in favor of their smartphones. Similarly, Minhas et al. (2025) examined university students and found that phubbing was positively associated with social media use and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). Notably, phubbing served as a mediator between the two, implying that increased social media use can heighten FoMO through elevated phubbing behavior.

Supporting these findings, Hanoum et al. (2023) reported that internal factors like loneliness and self-concept had a stronger influence on phubbing among Indonesian high school students than external factors such as academic cyberloafing and FoMO. Among these, loneliness and FoMO emerged as significant predictors. Likewise, Do and Nguyen (2022) demonstrated that in Vietnamese university students, Fear of COVID-19 and FoMO contributed to phone obsession and communication disturbances, which in turn predicted higher phubbing—especially among females and heavy smartphone users.

Personality traits also play a role in phubbing behavior. Parmaksız and Kılıçarslan (2021) found that higher levels of aggression were linked to increased phubbing, whereas greater emotional intelligence predicted lower phubbing, highlighting the role of individual differences in phone-related social interactions. In a related study, Fang et al. (2020) discovered that emotional support derived from social media use was

positively associated with phubbing. This relationship was mediated by FoMO and problematic social media use, suggesting that perceived online support can indirectly foster phubbing through compulsive internet habits.

Demographic and cultural variations have also been noted. Khare and Qasim (2019) observed high levels of phubbing among Indian undergraduates, with higher rates reported among females and students from the social sciences—particularly in dimensions such as smartphone anxiety and relational detachment. In Indonesia, Pemayun and Suralaga (2019) found that smartphone addiction significantly predicted phubbing among millennials. Although FoMO and conformity were not significant predictors, they still had a small but noteworthy influence. Davey et al. (2018) similarly identified smartphone addiction, internet addiction, FoMO, and low self-control as key predictors of phubbing in Indian youth. These behaviors were associated with adverse psychological outcomes such as increased depression, psychological distress, and lower well-being.

Saleem et al. (2023) found that emotion regulation training significantly reduced phubbing behavior and improved family relationships among adolescents in Pakistan. Their study highlighted that phubbing was positively associated with poor family dynamics, suggesting that interventions aimed at enhancing emotional regulation can play a crucial role in mitigating phone-related relational issues. Extending this focus to romantic relationships, Frackowiak et al. (2023) demonstrated that partner phubbing led to increased daily negative emotions such as sadness and loneliness. However, these adverse emotional effects were moderated by the presence of emotional understanding and validation from one's partner—underscoring the emotional toll of phubbing and the buffering effect of emotional responsiveness in close relationships.

The negative impact of phubbing extends beyond adolescents and couples to the parent–child relationship. Blachnio (2024) synthesized a broad range of studies showing that parental phubbing harms preschool children's emotional well-being, behavior, and overall development. Consequences included emotional detachment, weakened parent–child bonds, more frequent tantrums, impaired learning, poor self-regulation, and the development of unhealthy habits. Building on this, Liu et al. (2024) found that parental phubbing led to increased screen use among young children. This effect was partially mediated by parent–child conflict, while the child's emotional regulation ability moderated the relationship. Children with stronger emotion regulation skills were less affected, emphasizing the importance of both mindful parenting and the development of emotional resilience in children.

Demographic trends in phubbing have also been observed in the academic context. Khare and Qasim (2019) reported elevated levels of phubbing among Indian undergraduates, with particularly high rates among females and students in the social sciences—especially in dimensions such as smartphone anxiety and relational detachment. Complementing these findings, Shensa et al. (2016) reported that heavy social media users (defined as using social media for more than two hours per day) experienced lower levels of perceived emotional support. This highlights the emotional cost of intense digital engagement and further reinforces concerns regarding the relational and psychological consequences of phubbing behavior.

Albalá-Genol et al. (2024) found that in Argentina, phubbing is widely perceived as a normative social behavior and is positively associated with Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), particularly the craving for novel information and feelings of social exclusion. These findings indicate that in some cultural contexts, phubbing may not be seen as deviant but rather as a socially accepted norm, which nonetheless carries emotional consequences.

A growing body of research has highlighted the link between COVID-19-related stress, FoMO, and emotional well-being. Dong et al. (2024) reported that pandemic-induced stress significantly increased depression and FoMO among Chinese university students; however, strong emotion regulation and online social support served as protective factors that mitigated these effects. Similarly, Flack et al. (2024) demonstrated that poor emotion regulation linked FoMO to problematic social media use and doomscrolling, with intrapersonal regulation serving as a critical mediator. These findings collectively underscore the buffering role of emotion regulation in mitigating the adverse psychological effects associated with FoMO and digital overuse.

In the Indian context, Patani and Babu (2023) found that among college students, higher smartphone use and elevated FoMO were associated with reduced social connectedness, pointing to how excessive digital engagement can erode real-world social relationships. Conversely, Rawal et al. (2023) found no significant correlation between FoMO and social media use among Indian college students, though their conclusions were constrained by a limited sample size. In contrast, Mahmud et al. (2023) showed that Indonesian adolescents with higher self-esteem reported lower FoMO, and that emotion regulation moderated this relationship. This suggests that emotionally resilient adolescents are better protected from the negative effects of low self-esteem on FoMO.

FoMO has also been identified as a key driver of addictive digital behaviors. Dongre and Gawali (2022) reported that FoMO was the strongest psychological predictor of social media addiction among Indian university students, followed by loneliness and low self-esteem—highlighting how unmet emotional needs contribute to compulsive online usage. Supporting this, Bhardwaj and Bhattacharya (2022) found a strong positive correlation between FoMO and the frequency of social media use. Similarly, Alabri (2022) emphasized the role of the need to belong as a foundational driver of FoMO, both directly and indirectly through increased social media use, with women found to be more vulnerable due to stronger social belonging needs.

The emotional and behavioral consequences of FoMO extend beyond digital habits to overall well-being. Fabris et al. (2020) found that FoMO contributes to emotional distress not only directly but also indirectly—by increasing stress when individuals feel neglected on social media, which subsequently leads to addiction and deteriorates emotional health. Koca and Saatçı (2022) found that FoMO partially mediated the relationship between poor parent–adolescent relationships and problematic internet use among Turkish university students, indicating that strained family dynamics can amplify FoMO and fuel excessive online engagement. Similarly, Naik and Sherekar (2022) reported that among Indian youth, FoMO and emotional regulation difficulties were linked to impulsivity and social networking addiction. Notably, cognitive reappraisal served as a protective factor, highlighting the importance of adaptive coping strategies.

Extending this line of research, Hayran and Anik (2021) found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, FoMO persisted even in virtual contexts and was linked to decreased well-being. Reported effects included sleep disturbances, impaired concentration, and loss of productivity—outcomes driven by elevated digital exposure and compulsive information seeking during the health crisis.

Emotion regulation has consistently emerged as a crucial factor in mitigating the negative psychological effects associated with digital overuse and compulsive technology behaviors. Cui et al. (2024) found that among Chinese college students, nomophobia—the fear of being without a mobile phone—was prevalent and significantly shaped by emotion regulation strategies. Specifically, cognitive reappraisal helped reduce nomophobia by enhancing psychological resilience, while expressive suppression heightened it.

Resilience functioned as both a mediator and buffer in this relationship. Similarly, Mahmud et al. (2023) reported that among Indonesian adolescents, higher self-esteem was associated with lower levels of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), and this relationship was moderated by emotion regulation, indicating that emotionally well-regulated individuals are less susceptible to FoMO even when self-esteem is low. Further reinforcing the mediating role of emotion regulation, Flack et al. (2024) demonstrated that intrapersonal regulation fully mediated the relationship between FoMO and problematic digital behaviors such as social media overuse and doomscrolling. This finding underscores the importance of internal coping mechanisms in managing digital stressors. Supporting its practical application, Saleem et al. (2023) showed that emotion regulation training not only reduced phubbing behaviors among adolescents in Pakistan but also improved family dynamics—highlighting its value as a targeted intervention strategy. Likewise, Naik and Sherekar (2022) found that cognitive reappraisal was negatively correlated with social networking addiction, suggesting that adaptive emotion regulation strategies serve as protective factors against compulsive digital engagement.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Aim:

To investigate the impact of perceived phubbing on emotional regulation and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) among young adults in India.

3.2 Objectives:

1. To examine the relationship between perceived phubbing and emotional regulation (both cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression).
2. To investigate the relationship between perceived phubbing and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO).

3.3 Rationale:

In an increasingly digital world, the use of mobile phones during face-to-face interactions has become common, leading to behaviors such as "phubbing." The perception of being ignored due to someone's phone use—termed perceived phubbing—has emerged as a growing social and psychological concern. Research suggests that perceived phubbing can trigger emotional distress and a sense of exclusion, particularly among young adults. Simultaneously, the rising phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), characterized by anxiety about being left out of rewarding experiences, is found to be linked with digital behavior patterns. Emotional regulation, which involves how individuals manage and respond to emotional experiences, may play a crucial role in moderating the effects of phubbing and FoMO. This study is important in understanding how perceived phubbing contributes to emotional challenges among Indian youth and how emotional regulation strategies might buffer or exacerbate the impact of these digital behaviors.

3.4 Hypotheses

H1: There will be significant relationship between Perceived Phubbing and Cognitive Reappraisal among young adults.

H2: There will be significant relationship between Perceived Phubbing and Expressive Suppression among young adults.

H3: There will be significant relationship between Perceived Phubbing and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) among young adults.

3.5 Research Design:

This study follows a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationships among percei-

ved phubbing, emotional regulation strategies (cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression), and FoMO.

3.6 Sample:

The study used convenience sampling to collect data from young adults aged 18 to 30 years residing across various colleges and urban areas in India. The final sample comprised 213 participants, with a gender distribution of 108 females, 104 males, and 1 non-binary participant.

3.7 Measures:

Perceived Phubbing Scale

The Perceived Phubbing Scale used in this study was adapted from the Partner Phubbing Scale developed by Roberts and David (2016). The original scale consisted of 9 items designed to assess the extent to which individuals perceive being ignored or excluded by someone due to mobile phone use. Items were modified to reflect generalized interpersonal settings beyond romantic relationships. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (All the time), with higher scores indicating greater perceived phubbing. The original scale reported good internal consistency ($\alpha = .94$; Roberts & David, 2016). In the present study, the adapted version also demonstrated high reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89.

Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ)

The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) was developed by Gross and John (2003) to assess individual differences in the habitual use of two emotional regulation strategies: Cognitive Reappraisal (6 items) and Expressive Suppression (4 items). Items are scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). Higher scores indicate greater use of the respective strategy. Gross and John (2003) reported strong internal consistencies for both subscales ($\alpha = .79$ for Cognitive Reappraisal and $\alpha = .73$ for Expressive Suppression), as well as strong convergent validity with constructs like emotional awareness and well-being. In the current sample, Cronbach's alpha was .83 for the Cognitive Reappraisal subscale and .76 for the Expressive Suppression subscale.

Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMO)

The FoMO Scale was developed by Przybylski et al. (2013) to measure the pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent. It consists of 10 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all true of me) to 5 (Extremely true of me). Higher scores indicate a greater tendency to experience FoMO. The original scale demonstrated high internal consistency ($\alpha = .88$) and satisfactory construct validity, correlating positively with social media engagement and negative affect (Przybylski et al., 2013). In the present study, the FoMO Scale showed a Cronbach's alpha of .87.

3.8 Procedure

The researcher distributed printed copies of the questionnaire sets to students across various colleges and youth spaces. Participants were first provided with an informed consent form explaining the purpose of the research, assurance of confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Each form took approximately 15–20 minutes to complete. All forms were collected physically and stored securely. Data entry was done manually using Microsoft Excel, and the responses were later analyzed using SPSS software.

3.9 Data Analysis

The collected data were coded and analyzed using SPSS (Version 27). Descriptive statistics were employed to examine the means, standard deviations, and score ranges for each variable. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to assess the relationships among perceived phubbing, emotional

regulation (including cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression), and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). Additionally, linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether perceived phubbing significantly predicts levels of FoMO.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were conducted on the data. Since all skewness values (ranging from -0.409 to 0.298) and kurtosis values (ranging from -0.975 to 0.373) fell within the range of ± 2 for skewness and ± 7 for kurtosis (West, Finch, & Curran, 1995), the assumption of normality was not violated.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
FOMO	7.75	10	46	0.31	-0.42
CogReap	4.00	3	21	-0.50	-0.18
Expsup	4.60	3	21	0.33	-0.64
PHUB	6.84	37	78	0.15	0.64

Notes. FOMO, Fear of Missing Out; CogReap, Cognitive Reappraisal; Expsup, Expressive Suppression; PHUB, Phubbing.

Further, Pearson's correlation analysis and were conducted to examine and understand the underlying associations between these variables.

4.2 Pearson Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between perceived phubbing (PHUB), fear of missing out (FoMO), and emotional regulation strategies—cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. Supporting H3, a significant positive correlation was found between PHUB and FoMO ($r = .184$, $p = .007$), suggesting that higher levels of perceived phubbing are associated with greater fear of missing out among young adults. However, H1 and H2 were not supported, as the correlations between PHUB and cognitive reappraisal ($r = .037$, $p = .587$) and between PHUB and expressive suppression ($r = .036$, $p = .598$) were both nonsignificant. These findings suggest that while perceived phubbing is related to FoMO, it may not be directly associated with emotional regulation strategies.

4.3 Regression Analysis

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether perceived phubbing (PHUB) significantly predicts fear of missing out (FoMO) among young adults. The results indicated that PHUB significantly predicted FoMO, $F(1, 211) = 7.41$, $p = .007$, accounting for approximately 3.4% of the variance ($R^2 = .034$). The regression coefficient for PHUB was significant ($\beta = .184$, $p = .007$), indicating that higher levels of perceived phubbing were associated with increased levels of FoMO. Specifically, for every one-unit increase in PHUB, FoMO increased by approximately 0.21 units ($B = 0.209$, 95% CI [0.058, 0.360]). These findings support H3, suggesting that perceived phubbing is a significant positive predictor of fear of missing out among young adults.

Table 2. Linear Regression Coefficients Predicting Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) from Perceived Phubbing (PHUB)

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	95% CI for B
Constant	13.33	4.30	—	3.10	.002	4.87, 21.80
PHUB	0.21	0.08	0.18	2.72	.007	0.06, 0.36

Notes. B = unstandardized coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardized coefficient; CI =confidence interval.

5. Discussion

The present study aimed to explore the associations between perceived phubbing, emotional regulation strategies (cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression), and fear of missing out (FoMO) among young Indian adults. Rooted in growing concerns about how digital behaviors affect psychological well-being, this research examined whether feeling ignored due to others' phone use (phubbing) could disrupt individuals' emotional regulation and intensify FoMO. Results provided partial support for the proposed hypotheses: while a significant relationship was found between perceived phubbing and FoMO (supporting Hypothesis 3), no significant relationships emerged between phubbing and either emotional regulation strategy. Consequently, Hypotheses 1 and 2 were not supported.

5.1.1 Perceived Phubbing and FoMO

The significant positive correlation between perceived phubbing and FoMO ($r = .184$, $p = .007$), alongside regression results showing that perceived phubbing predicted 3.4% of the variance in FoMO, affirms the psychological relevance of this digital behavior. This finding is consistent with prior literature, including a meta-analysis by Ansari et al. (2024), which identified a moderate to strong association (effect size = 0.43) between phubbing and FoMO. Similarly, Gao et al. (2023) and Wu and Yang (2021) emphasized that FoMO not only results from phubbing but may also reinforce it, creating a feedback loop of digital dependence and emotional dissatisfaction.

These findings suggest that when individuals are repeatedly subjected to phubbing, they may internalize the experience as social exclusion, thereby heightening their FoMO. This supports the idea that perceived neglect in social interactions can amplify anxieties about being left out of rewarding experiences, especially in a culture where social connectedness is highly valued.

5.1.2 Phubbing and Emotional Regulation

Contrary to Hypotheses 1 and 2, no significant relationships were found between perceived phubbing and either cognitive reappraisal ($r = .037$) or expressive suppression ($r = .036$). This result suggests that emotional regulation strategies, as measured in this study, may not be significantly influenced by external social behaviors like phubbing. Instead, these strategies might be more influenced by enduring personality traits or internal cognitive patterns, rather than situational experiences.

Although prior studies have linked emotional regulation with other forms of problematic smartphone use (e.g., Balta et al., 2018), the lack of association in this context suggests that phubbing may not be perceived as emotionally triggering enough to activate these strategies. Alternatively, participants might not have

consciously employed regulation strategies in response to being phubbed, or the emotional impact may have been diffused by habituation to such behavior.

5.2 Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be noted. First, the cross-sectional design restricts conclusions about causality. It remains unclear whether phubbing causes FoMO or whether individuals prone to FoMO are more likely to notice or be distressed by phubbing. Longitudinal research is necessary to unravel the directionality of these relationships.

Second, the use of self-report measures may have introduced biases such as social desirability or recall error. Participants may have underreported their engagement in phubbing or overstated their emotional competencies, thereby affecting the accuracy of the findings.

Third, the sample was drawn exclusively from urban areas in the Delhi NCR, limiting the generalizability of the results to rural populations or individuals from other cultural backgrounds. Cultural norms around digital etiquette, interpersonal communication, and emotional expression may vary widely, necessitating broader demographic inclusion in future research.

5.3 Future Research Directions

To overcome the limitations of this study and extend its findings, future research should employ longitudinal designs to examine how the relationships between phubbing, emotional regulation, and FoMO unfold over time. These designs could help determine whether certain behaviors or feelings precede others, thereby clarifying potential causal mechanisms.

Experimental designs are also recommended. By manipulating perceived phubbing in controlled social interactions, researchers could more directly test its emotional and cognitive consequences. This approach would strengthen the internal validity of claims about phubbing's psychological effects.

Moreover, qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews or focus groups could provide rich insights into how individuals interpret and respond emotionally to phubbing. These methods would allow for a deeper understanding of cultural and contextual factors that shape digital behavior. Expanding the emotional variables studied may also prove valuable. Emotions such as loneliness, jealousy, anxiety, and shame may be more relevant to the phubbing-FoMO dynamic than general emotion regulation strategies like reappraisal or suppression.

Lastly, interventions targeting digital mindfulness and social presence should be tested for their potential to reduce FoMO. Given the limited role of emotional regulation found in this study, these behavioral interventions may offer a more direct means of improving psychological outcomes related to smartphone-mediated social interactions.

6: Conclusion

This study contributes to the growing body of research on how digital behaviors like phubbing affect psychological well-being. The results affirm that perceived phubbing is significantly associated with higher levels of FoMO among young adults, reflecting the social and emotional costs of smartphone use in interpersonal settings. However, emotional regulation—specifically cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression—did not significantly relate to phubbing in this sample. These findings suggest that while individuals may experience distress from being phubbed, their internal strategies for managing emotions may not meaningfully alter this effect.

Future research should prioritize causal, longitudinal, and culturally diverse designs to better understand the nuances of digital disconnection and its emotional toll. Moreover, interventions may be more effective if they target behavioral patterns and social norms surrounding smartphone use, rather than focusing solely on internal emotional regulation strategies.

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