

# Article on Parental Phubbing and It's Effects

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## ABSTRACT

Parental phubbing refers to the act of parents using mobile phones in the presence of their children instead of engaging with them. It can lead to feelings of neglect, reduced emotional connection, and hindered social-emotional development in children. It is especially worrying as children may be the ones who stand to lose the most. Parents prioritize their digital devices over their children, which is a potential threat to children's healthy development. Parents use mobile phones instead of communicating with their children. When parents prioritize their mobile phones over their child, it may lead to a sense of neglect and diminished emotional connection. Parents also use their mobile devices in a way that is not appropriate for their child. Parents are also more likely to experience anxiety and depression in children and teens, and they are less likely to develop a positive self-concept.

**Keywords;** Parental Phubbing, Learning, Social Development, Anxiety, Addiction, Over Protection, Substance abuse and Parent-child relationship.

## INTRODUCTION

Let's start by acknowledging the following: Using technology to communicate, educate, or entertain ourselves is not inherently harmful. Computers and smartphones can be valuable tools to help us stay connected with people who are far away. However, there is a time and place for using them. If we focus on a technological device during a social interaction and ignore those around us, it disrupts the social dynamics. This may be unintentional and could be due to a pressing message or a habitual response to the sound of a notification. According to a recent report by Redseer Strategy Consultants (2022), Indians are spending approximately 7.3 hours per day on their smartphones for various purposes, with online messaging, social media, YouTube streaming, OTT content and short-form video being the most common activities. Many parents and children are incorporating screen time into their daily routines for entertainment, learning, and skill development.

There's no need to blame anyone, as we have all been guilty of ignoring those around us in favor of our gadgets. Phubbing, or ignoring people with our smartphones, has become widespread as most of us always have our phones with us. However, it is not shocking that phubbing can diminish trust, weaken our relationships, and disrupt learning. Parental phubbing is especially worrying as children may be the ones who stand to lose the most.

## WHAT IS PARENTAL PHUBBING?

Phubbing refers to when someone snubs another person in favor of being on their phone. The term "phubbing" was coined in Australia as part of a 2012 campaign by the Macquarie Dictionary to describe a growing trend of social behaviour where people ignore those around them while scrolling on their

smartphones.[5] “Using a smartphone in a social setting of two or more people, and interacting with the smartphone rather than the person or people present” (Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas 2016). Phubbing, or “phone snubbing”, has been defined by researchers as “the act of ignoring someone present in favour of a mobile phone” (Lv et al 2022)

“Parental phubbing” refers to phubbing by a parent during a parent-child interaction (e.g., Jiang et al 2023).

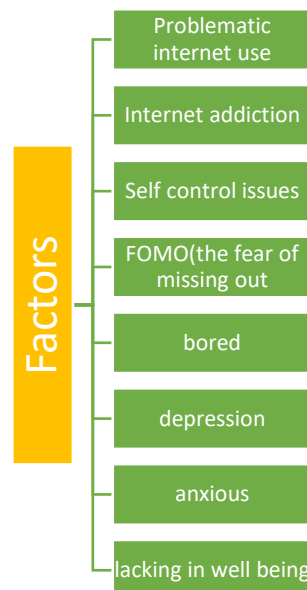
Parental phubbing refers to the act of parents using mobile phones in the presence of their children instead of engaging with them. With increasing smartphone use in many households, parental phubbing is a potential threat to children's healthy development. Social-emotional adjustment plays a vital role in children’s current and future healthy development. [1,2] However, a new phenomenon called “parental phubbing” has emerged in today’s digital age. Parental phubbing refers to the act of parents using mobile phones in the presence of their children instead of engaging with them [3,4].

This behavior can have a detrimental effect on children’s social-emotional adjustment. When parents prioritize their digital devices over their children, it can lead to feelings of neglect, reduced emotional connection, and hindered social-emotional development in children.[3]

Dr. Jenny Woo, cognitive science researcher and creator of the 52 Essential Relationship Skills, describes parental phubbing as the habit of parents focusing on their phones instead of interacting with or paying attention to their children. A 2022 study showed that parental phubbing was significantly correlated with parent–child attachment, ego depletion, and learning burnout. Sometimes people use an alternative word, “technoference” to mean the same thing as “phubbing”. But Brandon McDaniel, the researcher who first coined the term, defines technoference as “everyday interruptions in interpersonal interactions or time spent together that occur due to digital and mobile technology devices” (McDaniel and Radesky 2018)

## FACTORS CONTRIBUTING FOR PHUBBING

Studies suggest that phubbing is strongly linked with problematic internet use or internet addiction. Phubbing is also substantially more common among folks struggling with self-control issues, as well as those who experience high levels of FOMO (the fear of missing out), and/or who feel bored. Other factors that contribute to phubbing include feeling depressed, anxious, or lacking in well-being[6] (Arenz and Schnauber-Stockmann 2023).



## EFFECTS OF PARENTAL PHUBBING AMONG CHILDREN:

The child might feel frustrated and sad, leading to acting out. Over time, engaging in phubbing behavior can result in decreased self-esteem and reduced confidence in other social situations. Parental phubbing is also connected to higher levels of anxiety and depression in kids and teens. Parents feel less connected with their child in general when they are distracted, like when they are using a mobile device. This might result in reduced communication, causing the child to lose important chances for development. In the end, children acquire knowledge most effectively through engaging with their guardians.

What happens kids experience parental phubbing on a regular basis? Some investigators have tried to answer this question by performing correlational studies. In these studies, researchers ask kids to report on how often their parents phub them. Then researchers compare the parental phubbing reports with information about children's emotional and behavioral functioning. The results are concerning.

For example, when researchers reviewed more than 40 studies conducted on school-aged kids in China, they found that parental phubbing was linked with poor child adjustment. Children and teens reporting higher levels of parental phubbing were more likely to experience depression and anxiety, and less likely to have developed a positive self-concept. They were also more likely to experience externalizing behavior problems (which include aggression and defiance), and they were less likely to meet minimal standards of socio-emotional competence (Zhang et al 2023).

To the degree that kids interpret parental phubbing as rejection, it may also lead them to feel more alienated from their peers (Wu et al 2022), so we might expect parenting phubbing to have a detrimental effect on child's levels of loneliness and their ability to make friends. Higher levels of parental phubbing were linked with greater depression and anxiety (Stockdale et al 2018).

## GOOD WAYS TO PREVENT PARENTAL PHUBBING

It's not easy to dial back on smartphone use. Of course, you're still going to use your phone in front of your child, but being less distracted will have big benefits for their communication skills. Here are some ways to positively alter your cell phone habits.



- 1. Schedule phone-free time to focus on your child.** During this time, turn your phone off or leave it in another room. Focus solely on interacting with your little one.

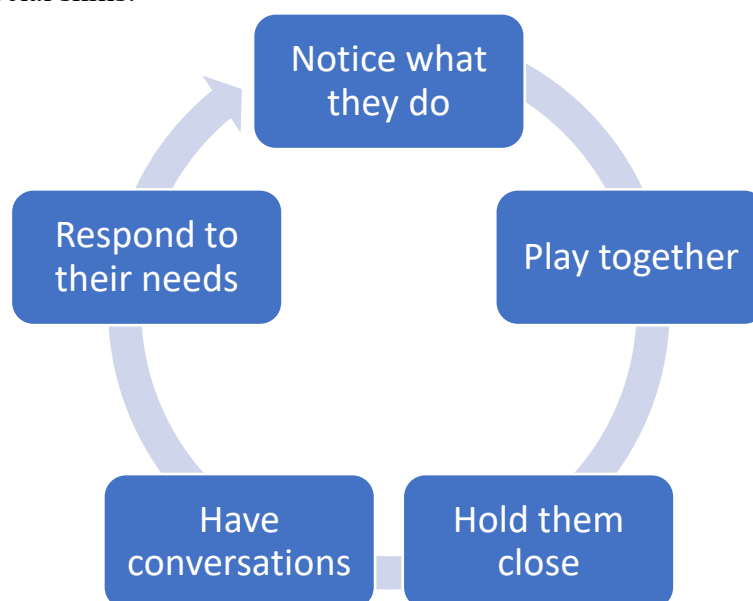
- 2. Mute your notifications.** It's hard to ignore buzzes and beeps. Go through your phone and turn off your notifications to limit distractions. You can also put the cell phone on "do not disturb" or airplane mode.
- 3. Establish "phone-free" locations.** Whether it's the playroom or the dining room, certain areas of your house can be off-limits for cell phone usage.
- 4. Make your phone less appealing.** Move your most distracting apps so they aren't as easy to access. You can also choose grayscale colours for your wallpaper and other settings, which might make you less inclined to pick up the device.
- 5. Explain your phone behaviors.** Do you need to use the phone while you're with your child? Make sure to give a solid reason. Maybe you're answering an important work message, scheduling a dentist visit, snapping a photo, or double-checking the time of your play date.
- 6. Use your screen time for good!** Smartphones can enhance parent-child interaction if used properly.<sup>8</sup> For example, video call with Grandma is a great way to practice communication skills while connecting with a loved one. And there are plenty of active learning apps and e-books for kids that help build language, especially when you're using them along with your child.

You don't need to completely stop using your phone around your children, but you can limit how often they see you scrolling. The benefits will be long-lasting.[12]

## HOW TO BOND WITH YOUR CHILD?

Parenting can be difficult at times and there is no such thing as a perfect parent. But if you can provide a loving and nurturing environment for your child to grow up in and you're a steady and reliable presence in their life, then you'll be helping them to have a great start in life. Here are some ways that can help you build a strong connection with your child from the moment you meet.

**Notice what they do.** When your baby or young child cries, gestures or babbles, respond appropriately with a hug, eye contact or words. This not only teaches your child that you're paying attention to them, but it helps to build neural connections in your little one's brain that support the development of communication and social skills.



**Play together.** By playing with your child, you are showing them that they are valued and fun to be around. Give them your full attention when you play games together and enjoy seeing the world from your

child's perspective. When you're enjoying fun moments and laughing together, your body releases endorphins ("feel-good hormones") that promote a feeling of well-being for both you and your child.

**Hold them close.** Cuddling and having skin-to-skin contact with your baby helps to bring you closer in many ways. Your child will feel comforted by your heartbeat and will even get to know your smell. As your child gets a bit older, hugging them can help them learn to regulate their emotions and manage stress. This is because when a child receives a hug, their brain releases oxytocin – the "feel good" chemical – and calms the release of cortisol, the "stress" chemical.

**Have conversations.** Taking interest in what your young child has to say shows them that you care about their thoughts and feelings. This can even start from day one. By talking and softly singing to your newborn, it lets them know that you are close by and paying attention to them. When they make cooing noises, respond with words to help them learn the back and forth of a conversation.

**Respond to their needs.** Taking care of your child and meeting their needs is also a great reminder of your ability to support your child.

Above all, enjoy being with your child, make the most of the time together and know that your love and presence go a long way to helping your child thrive.[13]

## CONCLUSION:

Children thrive when they feel safe, loved and nurtured. For many parents, forming a close bond with their child comes easily. For many others who did not feel cherished, protected or valued during their own childhood, it can be much more of a struggle. [13]

Providing your children with love and affection is essential for healthy brain development, confidence, growth and the ability to build lifelong relationships. A positive relationship between parents and children is important for children's development. Good relationships with children are based on presence, quality participation and building trust. As children grow, our relationships with them change and develop. Bad relationships with parents affect children over time. These problems include a lack of boundaries, rejection, inhibition and overprotection, overfeeding, substance abuse, and unrealistic expectations of children.

The child may become frustrated and sad and act out. Over time, this pattern of phubbing can lead to poor self-esteem and less confidence with other social interactions. Parental phubbing is also related to increased anxiety and depression in children and adolescents (Cuemath 2014) The parent-child relationship is important because it sets the foundation for the child's personality, life choices, and overall behavior. It can also affect the strength of your social, physical, mental and emotional health. This article lime light on parental phubbing demonstrating deterioration of social, physical, mental and emotional among children.

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