

EXPLORING STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT SUPERVISOR PHUBBING AND INVESTIGATING ITS DETERMINANTS

ÖĞRENCİLERİN DANIŞMAN SOSYOTELİZMİ İLE İLGİLİ ALGILARI VE BU DAVRANIŞIN ÖNCÜLLERİNİN ARAŞTIRILMASI

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Abstract

People are distracted by checking or using smartphones during a dyadic communication called phubbing. Early studies focus on the antecedents and consequences of phubbing behavior in romantic relations context, where the recent researches started to focus on the effects of phubbing on organizational settings. Although there has been insisted calls for research to understand phubbing behavior also in academic settings, related researches are still scarce. Thus, this study is a precious effort for presenting a new insight into phubbing literature by focusing a specific phubbing type called supervisor phubbing (Sphubbing) which possibly occurs during an academic meeting. Within the scope of the current study, it was investigated whether the factors such as supervisor's age, supervisor's title, supervisor's administrative duties and intensity, and the supervisor supervisee academic relation were the determinants of Sphubbing behavior. Results show that students are likely to deny that they expose to Sphubbing since they are also phubbers and accept this behavior as a 'norm.' Regression analysis results also prove that supervisor age, supervisor title and supervisor administrative roles have significant effect on Sphubbing while student-supervisor relationship is not.

Keywords: Phubbing, Supervisor Phubbing, Student-Supervisor Relationship.

Öz

Karşılıklı iletişim esnasında akıllı telefonların sürekli kullanılması pek çok kişiyi rahatsız etmekte ve bu durum phubbing (sosyotelizm) olarak adlandırılmaktadır. Konu hakkında gerçekleştirilen ilk çalışmalar sosyotelizm davranışının romantik ilişkilerdeki olası sebep ve sonuçlarına odaklanırken, daha sonraki çalışmalar bu durumun organizasyonel düzeydeki etkilerini araştırmıştır. Sosyotelizm davranışına eğitim ortamlarında da rastlanıldığı ve bu konunun da ele alınması gerekliliğine literatürde sıklıkla yer verilse de, şu ana kadar konu hakkında pek fazla çalışma gerçekleştirilmemiştir. Bu sebeple, bu çalışma literatürdeki

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bu eksikliği gidermek amacı ile gerçekleştirilen önemli bir adım olup, sosyotelizm davranışının özel bir türü olarak değerlendirilen danışman sosyotelizmine (Supervisor Phubbing-Sphubbing) odaklanmış ve ilgili kavram literature kazandırılmıştır. Danışmanın yaşı, akademik ünvanı, idari görevlerinin varlığı ve danışmanın öğrencisi ile akademik ilişkisi bağımsız değişken olarak regresyon modeline dahil edilmiş ve danışman sosyotelizmine olan etkileri araştırılmıştır. Yapılan analizler neticesinde danışman yaşı, akademik ünvanı ve idari görevlerin danışman sosyotelizmi ile anlamlı ilişki içinde olduğu görülmüştür. Sonuçlar öğrencilerin kendilerinin de sosyotelist davranışlar sergilemelerinden dolayı danışman sosyotelizminden rahatsız olmadıklarını ve bu davranışı 'yeni norm' olarak kabul ettiklerini de açıkça göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyotelizm, Danışman Sosyotelizmi, Öğrenci-Danışman İlişkisi.

1. INTRODUCTION

Smartphones have become ubiquitous. The current number of smartphone users today is 3.8 billion (almost half of the world's population) worldwide (Statista, 2021). The use of smartphones has become an indispensable part of daily life. A recent investigation has revealed that the average time spent on smartphones is 171 minutes per day, an average smartphone user checks their device an average of 63 times a day (Turner, 2021). Most smartphone users (85%) also check their devices while talking to friends and family (Turner, 2021), and this habit amounts to a great part of smartphone use (Oulasvirta et al., 2012). Therefore, the use of smartphones instead of focusing on face-to-face communication is considered a new problematic behavior (David and Roberts, 2020; 2017; Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas, 2016).

People are distracted by checking or using their smartphones while in communication, which often causes interruptions in conversation. This refers to phubbing concept (phone-snubbing) in the literature (Roberts and David, 2020, 2016; David and Roberts, 2017; Ugur and Koc, 2015; Haigh, 2015). This behavior can occur in many different social environments so that it emerges in different forms such as partner phubbing (David and Roberts, 2021; Khodabakhsh and Le Ong, 2021; Agua et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2019, 2017; Cizmeci, 2017; Roberts and David, 2016; McDaniel and Coyne, 2016; Krasnova et al., 2016; Coyne et al., 2011), boss phubbing (Roberts and David, 2020, 2017; Koçak, 2021; Özdemir and Erdem, 2021; Yasin et al., 2020), classroom phubbing (Nazir, 2020; Abramova et al., 2017; Ugur and Koc, 2015), parents' phubbing (Zhang et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2020; Xie et al., 2019; Hong et al., 2019), friend phubbing (Sun and Samp, 2021).

Recently, there has been an increasing interest in research on different forms of phubbing and their impact on relationships. For example, recent research has revealed that phubbing behavior has negative consequences on romantic relationships (partner-phubbing); such as relationship dissatisfaction (David and Roberts, 2021; Wang et al., 2019, 2017; Roberts and David, 2016; McDaniel and Coyne, 2016), lower personal well-being (Roberts and David, 2016; McDaniel and Coyne, 2016), romantic jealousy (David and Roberts, 2021; Krasnova et al., 2016), depression (Wang et al., 2017; Roberts and David, 2016), lower relational cohesion (Krasnova et al., 2016), and lower self-esteem (Wang et al., 2019). Moreover, research has shown that phubbing also negatively affects employee's job performance (Roberts and David, 2020), employee engagement (Roberts and David, 2017), supervisory trust (Roberts and David, 2017; Özdemir

and Erdem, 2021), social exclusion (Özdemir and Erdem, 2021), and employee's sense of belongingness, self-esteem, and meaningful existence (Yasin et al., 2020), etc. in business life (boss-phubbing).

Most studies in the field of phubbing have focused more on the consequences of this behavior than on what determines this behavior (Schneider and Hitzfeld, 2019). On the other hand, the antecedents of phubbing behavior have been studied by relatively few researchers (Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas, 2016; Chatterjee, 2020; Sun and Samp, 2021; Özdemir and Erdem, 2021). Therefore, there is a need to identify the main causes and antecedents of that problematic behavior. Relatedly, the main purpose of this study is to provide new insights on antecedents of Sphubbing behavior and to investigate the factors that cause Sphubbing. Therefore, this study makes a major contribution to research on phubbing. Within the scope of the current study, it was investigated whether the factors such as supervisor's age, supervisor's title, supervisor's administrative duties and intensity, and the supervisor supervisee academic relation were the determinants of Sphubbing behavior.

In this study, the phubbing concept is discussed in the context of academic relationships between supervisor-supervisee, namely supervisor phubbing (Sphubbing). We define Sphubbing as the behavior of supervisors ignoring their supervisees by using their smartphones while in an academic meeting in the current study. This research aims to contribute to the growing area of research by exploring Sphubbing.

2. RELATED LITERATURE

Phubbing is a multi-disciplinary study topic that includes psychology, technology, communication, social and cultural categories (Capilla, Issa and Guti, 2021). Among these categories, psychological and technological research fields are the most linked to phubbing behavior. Research in these two categories aim to explore the possible effects of phubbing, which is triggered by information and communication technologies, on human psychology. Indeed, at the beginning of phubbing research end of 2013, researchers generally focus on the effects of problematic technology use on people's mental wellbeing (Best, Manktelow and Taylor, 2014; Magsamen-Conrad, Billiotte-Verhoff and Greene, 2014), physical health (Rosen *et al.*, 2014), self-esteem (Sariyska *et al.*, 2014), and other related emotions such as depressions, anxiety, impulse control, loneliness, closeness etc. (Przybylski and Weinstein, 2013; Smetaniuk, 2014). However, none of these studies directly coin the term phubbing but rather to say problematic or excessive technology use. Although phubbing has been firstly mentioned by the Stop Phubbing campaign created by McCann, promoted by Macquarie Dictionary of Australia (Internet Archive, 2013), and used in a few thesis project (Coehoorn, 2014; Ting, 2014), it takes some time to be formally used and published in a journal. Firstly known studies have been carried out by Karadağ *et al.* (2015) and Ugur and Koc (2015) which the former one focuses on the determinants of phubbing and the latter aims to explore the effects of phubbing in classroom settings. Regardless of the categories mentioned in the beginning of the paragraph, phubbing studies can be divided into three groups based on their research environments: (1) social studies, (2) business life studies, and (3) educational environment studies.

Social studies generally deal with the phubbing issues that occurred in romantic relations called partner phubbing (Pphubbing) or family relations. In this group, the first study has a two-stage research design and investigated the Pphubbing and relationship satisfaction among couples (Roberts and David, 2016). In the first phase of the study, a reliable and valid Pphubbing scale has been developed. In the second phase, data has been collected, and a sequential moderated-mediation model has been analyzed. Results show that Pphubbing indirectly impacts depression through relationship satisfaction and life satisfaction. The findings of this study have also been supported by the following research. For example, McDaniel and Coyne (2016) have found that partners who exposed more phubbing behavior in their relationships reported lower relationship satisfaction, more depressive symptoms, and lower life satisfaction. Another similar study specifically focuses on the role of relationship length (Wang *et al.*, 2017) and presents an interesting perspective. Authors claim that length of relationship can moderate the relation between Pphubbing and depression. The basis for their hypothesis stems from the interdependence theory, which posits that the duration of couples being together and their level of influence from each other show parallelism. This means phubbing may not cause a problem for newly married couples where it may be frustrating in relatively older marriages. Indeed, the results of the study show that Pphubbing causes depression among partners married more than seven years. Although it has been generally agreed in the literature that Pphubbing negatively affects relationship satisfaction, there are a few studies that demonstrate opposite results. For instance, a study's result have revealed that although women have been exposed to Pphubbing more than husbands, the women's relationship satisfaction level is higher than the male (Cizmeci, 2017). According to the author, this contradiction may root in the national culture where the women are accepted themselves as the "marriage keeper" and are not willing to admit that they feel dissatisfied with their marriages. In addition, to investigate the effects of phubbing in romantic relations, exploring the same phenomena in family relations is also essential. It is a known fact that phubbing has a negative impact on parenting quality (McDaniel *et al.*, 2018) and also causes a feeling of exclusion among family members. Although phubbing behavior is regarded as a disrespectful habit mostly by elder people (Kadylak *et al.*, 2018), it also influences younger people in a bad way by reducing mental health, which in turn academic burnout (Bai *et al.*, 2020).

In contrast to the rising amount of social studies, only a few studies have investigated the phubbing effects in the business context (Al-Saggaf and O'Donnell, 2019). Although there are previous attempts to explore the impact of multi-communication in the workplace (Cameron and Webster, 2011), researches that specifically focus on phubbing behavior in workplace settings is still scarce. Within this context, a term called 'boss phubbing' (Bphubbing) has been firstly defined by Roberts and David (2017, p.206) as "the extent to which a supervisor uses or is distracted by cell phone while in the presence of subordinates." In their research, they have conducted three studies to examine the impact of Bphubbing on employee supervisory trust which subsequently impacts employee engagement through the psychological conditions. Across all three studies, results prove the fact that Bphubbing lowers the employee's trust in their supervisor which in turn decreasing in their engagements. Similar studies have also found that Bphubbing has negative effects on organizational-self-esteem and feelings of social exclusion (Yasin *et al.*, 2020) as well as job satisfaction and job performance (Roberts and David, 2020di). A recent and interesting study investigates the phubbing issue under divergent organizational cultures (Koçak, 2021). To do this, Being Phubbed in the Workplace Scale (BPWS) has been

created and tested during a five-day daily diary. It has been concluded that detrimental effects of phubbing occurred only if a clan culture is present in an organization.

The last category consists of phubbing studies conducted in the educational environment. It is not a surprising fact that phubbing also happened in schools since nearly 90% of students own a smartphone (Koç, Turan and Okursoy, 2016), 62% continue to use their phone for class-related activities (Jacobsen and Forste, 2011), and check their phones approximately 11 times per lesson (McCoy, 2013). Although the prevalent usage of mobile phones and their consequences have been well discussed in the literature (Lepp, Barkley and Karpinski, 2015; Han and Yi, 2019), only a few recent attempts have been made to understand phubbing phenomena in educational settings. Most of the studies focus on student's perspectives, where there are also few that put an emphasis on the perceptions of teachers' (Dupont, 2021). Within this context, gender differences between male and female students (Escalera-Chávez, García-Santillán and Molchanova, 2020), predictors and consequences (Abramova *et al.*, 2017; Brkljačić, Šakić and Kaliterna-Lipovčan, 2018), perceptions and attitudes (Nazir, 2017; Cao, Jiang and Liu, 2018; Hunter-Brown, 2021) have been discussed.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Descriptive Statistics

One hundred and ninety-two participants were recruited for this study. The sample of the study was chosen by the purposive sampling method. Accordingly, the sample consisted of people who are in the master's thesis semester, who have a master's degree, who are in the doctoral thesis semester, and who have a doctorate degree (limited as maximum one year). Some descriptive statistics of the respondents are reported below in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive characteristics of the students

Characteristics	N	%
Gender		
Male	63	32.8
Female	129	67.2
Age		
<30	120	62.5
30-37	64	33.3
38+	8	4.2
Educational stage		
Master_thesis	110	57.3
Master_graduated	26	13.5
PhD*	21	10.9
PhD_thesis	30	15.6
PhD_graduated	5	2.6
Which of the following best describes you?		
I am/was a res.assist at the same university with my supervisor	15	7.8
I am/was a res.assist at a different university than my supervisor	17	8.9
I am/was just a student	160	83.3

*includes students taking PhD courses or studying for proficiency exam

As it can be seen from Table 1 above, majority of our participants are young (62.5 percent) females (67.2 percent). More than half of them (57.3 percent) in their master thesis semester and just a student without no academic title (83.3 percent). Since the dataset also includes students who have completed their PhD thesis within the past year (limited as maximum one year), the second 'to be word' (was) has been also added to each statement. Besides summarizing the respondents' characteristics, Table 2 presents the supervisors' characteristics and supervisor-student relationships information.

Table 2. Descriptive characteristics of the supervisors and supervisor-student relationship

Characteristics	N	%
Supervisor Gender		
Male	120	62.5
Female	72	37.5
Supervisor Age		
<35	10	5.2
35-44	85	44.3
45-54	61	31.8
>55	36	18.8
Academic Title		
Assist.Prof.	64	33.3
Assoc.Prof.	63	32.8
Prof.Dr.	65	33.9
Did you choose to work with your thesis advisor?		
Yes	120	62.5
No	72	37.5
Does your supervisor have administrative roles?		
Yes	111	57.8
No	81	42.2
During your academic meetings, how often do you expose to phubbing by your supervisor?		
Never	73	38.0
Rarely	75	39.1
Sometimes	28	14.6
Often	12	6.3
Always	4	2.1
If you were being phubbed (by your supervisor) during an academic meeting, was it bothered you?		
Yes	26	13.5
No	132	68.8
If you were bothered, did you say your complaint to your supervisor?		
Yes	3	1.6
No	92	47.9

The higher percentage of supervisors are male (62.5 percent), in their middle-aged (44.3 percent) and have evenly distributed academic titles. When it is asked students if they chose their supervisor

by their own, the majority of them (62.5 percent) state that ‘yes they are.’ However, a considerable percent of students (37.5 percent) are forced to choose another supervisor, which is regarded as unethical in academic independence.

It seems more than half of the supervisors also have administrative roles which can be considered as a usual situation in Turkey. Students generally claim that they never or rarely expose to phubbing behavior during their academic meetings. It is remarkably interesting that students who admit that they were phubbed during an academic meeting at least once generally feel no bothered by this behavior. Even if they feel bothered, they hesitate to say their complaints to their supervisor and prefer to remain silent.

3.2. Statistical Model and Results

The dependent variable of the study is decided as Sphubbing since the main scope of this study is to determine the antecedents of Sphubbing behavior. Sphubbing is defined as a categorical variable (never, rarely, sometimes, often, always) which the value of category represents the ‘level of Sphubbing severity’ in an ordinal scale. When the dependent variable is discrete and contains more than two categories, the Ordered Logistic Regression (ologit) model is a commonly used method to use (Khorashadi *et al.*, 2005). However, it is a well-established fact that ologit method is the most appropriate type of logit model when the order of the values is taken into account (Michalaki *et al.*, 2015); heteroskedasticity issue has to be documented before moving further. If heteroskedasticity is decided to be a problematic issue, calculating an estimation with Weighted Least Squares (WLS) Model is more appropriate. In this study, White test (White, 1980), which is a particular case of the Breusch – Pagan, is computed to decide heteroskedasticity. In the end, H0 is strongly accepted with the value of 7.012 for White’s general test statistic and the .9015 p-value. It means that heteroskedasticity is not a problem for our data. At the end, the following regression model is estimated via ologit model:

$$SPhubbing = stu.sup.rel. + sup.age + sup.afil. + sup.adminst. + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

The groups of contributory factors which are studied are related to:

- *stu.sup.rel.*, represents the student-supervisor relationship in terms of the status of students during their course semester/thesis semester/proficiency exam and coded: I am/was a res.assist at the same university with my supervisor=1, I am/was a res.assist at a different university than my supervisor=2, I am/was a res.assist at the same university with my supervisor=3;
- *sup.age.*, represents the age of supervisor and coded: <35=1, 35-44=2, 45-54=3, >55=4;
- *sup.title*, represents the title of the supervisor and coded: Assist.Prof=1, Assoc.Prof=2, Prof. Dr=3;
- *sup.adminst.*, represents the existence/absence of the supervisor’s administrative roles. and coded: existence=1, absence=2

Multicollinearity among the contributory factors is checked via the calculation of pair-wise correlations and no error was detected. Final step, we run our regression model via STATA19 and Table 3 shows the results.

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Table 3. Results of the ologit regression

Independent variables (Contributory factors)	Dependent variable Sphubbing
<i>stu.sup.rel.</i>	-0.0783 (0.0984)
<i>sup.age</i>	-0.3232* (0.1921)
<i>sup.title</i>	0.3589* (0.2115)
<i>sup.adminst.</i>	-0.4735* (0.2755)
Number of obs	192
Pseudo R ²	0.0326
Model F-Stat	2.26
Model p-value	0.0644*

Notes: Values in the table represent the estimated coefficients. The values in the parentheses represent the standard deviation of the relevant coefficient. *, ** and *** represents the significance level of coefficients 10%, 5% and 1%, respectively.

In the output above, with a p-value of 0.06 proves that our model as a whole is statistically significant. The pseudo-R-squared of 0.0326 is also given. Results show that supervisor age (*sup.age.*), supervisor title (*sup.title*) and supervisor administrative roles (*sup.adminst.*) are statistically significant; student-supervisor relationship (*stu.sup.rel.*) is not. It can be said that supervisor age and administrative roles are negatively associated with exposing to Sphubbing behavior, where supervisor title is positively associated with exposing to Sphubbing, given that all of the other variables in the model are held constant. Consequently, it is concluded that young supervisors tend to show phubbing behaviors more than their elder counterparts. It is also stated that as the titles of the supervisors increase from assistant professor to professor, the probability of problematic mobile phone usage increases. Lastly, if the supervisors have an administrative role besides their academic-related duties, they are more likely to show phubbing behaviors.

4. CONCLUSION

Dependency on smartphones resulting in people interacting with their devices even during a dyadic communication which causes problematic relationship issues and called phubbing (Al-Saggaf and O'Donnell, 2019). Starting with the romantic relationship context (McDaniel and Coyne,

2016), the impact of phubbing has also been examined on family relationships (Bai *et al.*, 2020) and boss-employee relations (Roberts and David, 2017b, 2020). Although there has been insisted calls for research to understand phubbing behavior in academic settings (Abramova *et al.*, 2017), related researches are still scarce. Thus, this study is a precious effort for presenting a new insight into phubbing literature by focusing a specific phubbing type called supervisor phubbing (Sphubbing) which possibly occurs during an academic meeting.

Contrary to our expectation, most of the participants generally claim that they never or rarely expose to Sphubbing. What is more interesting is that the students who admit that they were phubbed during an academic meeting, generally not bothered from this behavior. Even if they feel bothered, they hesitate to say their complaints to their supervisor and prefer to remain silent. This interesting result can be explained by reciprocity theorem which is discussed in Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas' (2016, p.11) research. It is concluded that "...ignoring companions via smartphone may cause such behaviors to be reciprocated intentionally or unintentionally. In turn, and with repeated reciprocity of phubbing behavior, this may influence the extent to which phubbing is perceived to be normative or acceptable." The authors also stated that personal behaviors could often be affected by others' thoughts and do the same as themselves. Further, people generally assume that others also phub in the same way and perpetuating the behavior. Within the context of our study, students are more likely to deny that they expose to Sphubbing since they are also phubbers and accept this behavior as a 'norm.'

Although the minority of students are being phubbed, it is very important to reveal the antecedents of this behavior. Regression analysis results show that supervisor age, supervisor title, and the administrative duties of the supervisor are the contributory factors on Sphubbing. It is found that supervisor age is negatively associated with Sphubbing. This finding is consistent with previous researches that proved the widespread usage of smartphones among younger people which is evaluated as offensive and disruptive by older people (Kadylak *et al.*, 2018).

The administrative roles of the supervisors' have also been found a negative association with Sphubbing. It means if the supervisors have an administrative role besides their academic related duties, they are more likely to show phubbing behaviors. One of the plausible reasons for this finding may causes from the undue burden of administrative roles. Previous research also find that the negative effects of administrative roles on academic research productivity (Lou *et al.*, 2018). Supervisors with more administrative duties are more likely to be getting distracted during an academic meeting and cause Sphubbing. The last contributory factor to Sphubbing is determined as supervisor title which is found positively associated. This finding is parallel with the previous finding since administrative tasks of supervisors are generally much more when they locate in higher titles.

4.1. Limitations and Further Studies

This study has only examined some antecedents of Sphubbing behavior. More research is required to determine the efficacy of the antecedents used in this study on Sphubbing. More broadly,

research is also needed to determine possible other antecedents of phubbing behavior. Further research in this field would be of great help to determine the possible predictors. The scope of this study was limited in terms of supervisor-supervisee relationships. It is suggested that the impact of relevant antecedents is also investigated in other phubbing contexts (e.g. partner phubbing, boss phubbing, etc.) in future studies. It should also be noted that the study only examined phubbing behavior in face-to-face academic meetings, not during virtual meetings. Finally, the current study only investigated the use of smartphones by supervisors while at an academic meeting, not the use of other technological devices such as tablets, laptops, and computers. Evaluating the use of such devices during communication could be the subject of another future study.

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