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Partner Phubbing, Romantic Jealousy and Marital Satisfaction among Married Individuals

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Abstract

This study aimed to find out the relationship between partner phubbing, romantic jealousy and marital satisfaction among married individuals. Predictive role of partner phubbing and romantic jealousy on marital satisfaction was also aimed to explore. This study used cross-sectional research design. Data consisted of $N = 300$ married individuals from major cities of Pakistan; $n = 150$ men $n = 150$ women. Partner Phubbing Scale, Motives for Inducing Romantic Jealousy, ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale were used. Pearson product moment correlation and multiple hierarchical regression analyses were carried out. The result showed that partner phubbing was positively correlated with romantic jealousy. Partner phubbing and romantic jealousy were found to be negatively correlated with marital satisfaction. Results also revealed that partner phubbing and romantic jealousy negatively predicted marital satisfaction. It is concluded that increasing use of cell phones leads towards jealousy which in turn may impact relationship satisfaction and personal well-being.

Keywords: Partner phubbing, Romantic jealousy, Marital Satisfaction

Introduction

Technology devices are popular these days providing chances to interact with those who are far away. At the same time, these devices are likely to disturb communication and interconnection among those who physically exist at one place. Certain interferences in partners and other family relations have the capacity to adversely affect relationship consequences (McDaniel et al., [2018](#)). The present day and age is considered as the smartphone era, where smartphones universally connected within our daily lives (Thompson et al., [2015](#)). These digital devices are now used as an alternative for personal computers to carry out day to day projects such as electronic communication granting constant access to a particular implementation and a chance to interact conveniently (Fawareh & Jusoh,

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2014). The landscapes of couple relaxation time in certain connections rely upon technology use. Technology has possibly interrupted up close and personal interactions and quality time together. However, almost every time when couples engage in shared technology use create bonding (McDaniel et al., 2020).

The term phubbing illustrates the action of ignoring an individual in a general environment in order to focus on one's cell phone as opposed to interacting to the individual straightforwardly (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016). Roberts and David (2016) specified partner phubbing as the degree to which a person uses or is occupied by their mobile phone while together with his/her relationship partner. The extravagant use of cell phones in the romantic setting has been displayed to depict a hurdle to purposeful conversation, generating disputes, bringing down relationship fulfillment, and hurting individual emotional health (Kransova et al., 2016).

Romantic jealousy is characterized as the complex emotions, thoughts, and practices that incorporate dangers to one's self-esteem or self-connection (White, 1981, p. 129). Sometimes, in some cases, jealousy may lead to more pleasing relationships. Regardless, jealousy is frequently viewed as a reason of utmost relationship issues, adding to offense and dispute among couples (Guerrero et al., 1995).

Marital satisfaction can be characterized as the behavior an individual has toward his or her own marital affair (King, 2016). Marital satisfaction was described as a perspective of more prominent or decreased suitability against individual's own marital relationship (Roach et al., 1981). Reis and Shaver (1988) found that the use of mobile phones could interrupt the factors that have been demonstrated to be associated with marital satisfaction. Individuals likewise need to realize that their spouse care about them and can take care of future necessities across differing circumstances (Holmes & Rempel, 1989).

Theoretical Framework

Social exchange theory can be tested to better understand the potential adverse consequence innovative interruptions might have on close relations. At times when couples spend time together physically, they might have an assumption for full focus, to some extent now and again (Miller-Ott & Kelly, 2015). Whether a partner is actually present however utilizing a gadget, their partner might see this as a slight or an inclination for speaking

with another person over them, which might incite sensations of dismissal or struggle (diminished prize/expanded expense (McDaniel & Coyne, [2016](#)).

Conforming to this perspective, development and firmness of the sensations of jealousy is an outcome of two determinants. From first perspective, a jealous individual ought to consider the “partner’s contribution with an action or potentially someone else as in spite of the meaning of relationship”; on the contrary, the actual relationship ought to be recognized as important (Hansen, [1991](#)). Expanding this point of view, Hansen ([1991](#)) moreover presented the idea of “boundary ambiguity”, formerly developed by Boss ([1987](#)). Concentrating on communication among families, Boss et al. ([1990](#)) characterized boundary ambiguity as “the relatives not realizing who is in and who is excluded from the framework”. Jealousy is normally linked to disintegrations in the well-being of an association (Andersen et al., [1995](#)) just like the variety of other unfavorable consequences arranged towards one’s self, e.g. decreased confidence (Bringle, [1981](#); Buunk, [1997](#)), or the purpose for instance assault (Chiffriller & Hennessy, [2007](#)).

The study was conducted to analyze the connections between Facebook intrusion, jealousy in idealized relationships, and corresponding consequences in undergraduates which were involved in a romantic relationship. Sample comprised of 342 undergraduate students and Facebook intrusion, Romantic Jealousy, and Relationship Satisfaction questionnaires were administered on them. Results revealed that Facebook intrusion was associated to relationship annoyance, by means of jealous cognitions and spying efforts. In addition, the chances of high levels of Facebook intrusion interrupting over into romantic relationships, bringing about issues such as jealousy and disappointment (Elphinston & Noller, [2010](#)).

A study was conducted to investigate the collateral impact of partner phubbing on depression through relationship satisfaction and relationship length as a moderator. A sample of 243 married individuals who were Chinese also, took part in the study. The Partner Phubbing Scale, Relationship Satisfaction Scale and The Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale were administered. The results found that partner phubbing showed an adverse impact on relationship satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction had a negative impact on depression. Partner

phubbing emphatically affect depression by means of relationship satisfaction, and this indirect effect just existed among those who married over seven years (Wang et al., [2017](#)).

Another study was conducted to investigate the extravagant usage of cellular phones in the romantic settings came to be displayed to portray a hurdle to purposeful statements, generating disagreement, bringing down relationship satisfaction, and impairing personal welfare. In view of the examination of subjective and determinate reactions from “generation Y” subscribers, results indicated as partner phubbing is related to increased desires of jealousy that is conversely identified to partner’s associative bond. Furthermore, jealousy acts as a mediating character in the connection among smartphone use of the spouse and associative bonding, going about to be a component after such unwanted connection (Kransova et al., [2016](#)).

The study was conducted to analyze the effect of social media on mutual correspondent relationships amongst couples in Tanzania. The study comprised of 117 participants. Data was collected from both qualitative and quantitative methods. The results revealed that social media has a positive impact on mutual relationships among couples as 80 percent of participants reported communication assists them with reinforcing their relationship, while 12% said they don't know and 8 percent clashed. As long as the utilization of social media anticipates fundamentally that there is positive as well as negative association between the use of social media and the partners in relationship, attached and married (Mpepo. [2017](#)).

Rationale

Mobile phones have become an integral part of life, causing researchers to take notice of their social outcomes. It has been recommended that due to their role in keeping up with social relationships, the smartphone, as an item, has become the portrayal of an individual’s social organization (Kardos et al., [2018](#)). While cell phones have brought up to a handful of advantages to individuals, it has also evoked certain uneasiness. One of the difficulties that majority are confronting these days the time consumed together with friends or everybody else, is the situation when all of them have full focus on their mobile phones and nobody seems to visually connect to anybody sitting around that table. Phubbing is an action word whereby one is snubbing another person by effectively using their cell phones even when one is near to another person (Roberts & David, [2016](#)).

Phubbing is turning out to be more predominant due to the fame of cell phones. It should pay attention that phubbing is more habitual than one could possibly consider.

Although relationship satisfaction occurred to play significant part in producing depression in married individuals, it is little evident either partner phubbing may weaken relationship satisfaction or increasing depression (Wang et al., [2017](#)).

Roberts and David ([2016](#)) further illustrated that phubbing might bring about a reduced amount of relationship satisfaction between romantic couples that may by implication results in bringing down life satisfaction and even depression. The present study will be a contribution in the field of research which will help us in guiding to attain a better comprehension of the detrimental effects of partner phubbing behavior.

The review of the literature has revealed that couples that report high use of mobile phones report lower level of relationship satisfaction. Most of the studies on the effect of phubbing have concentrated on romantic partners (Roberts & David, [2016](#)) and several on married people especially in Asian culture.

Objectives

- To explore the relationship between partner phubbing, romantic jealousy and marital satisfaction in married individuals.
- To explore gender differences between partner phubbing, romantic jealousy and marital satisfaction in married individuals.
- To explore the predicting role of romantic jealousy and marital satisfaction among married individuals.

Hypotheses

- Partner phubbing is likely to be associated with increase in Romantic jealousy and decrease in marital satisfaction
- Romantic jealousy is likely to be associated with decrease in marital satisfaction.
- Males are likely to score more on Partner phubbing.
- Partner phubbing and romantic jealousy are likely to predict marital satisfaction.

Method

Research design

This quantitative study was based on cross-sectional research design.

Sample

The sample consisted of $N = 300$ married individuals from Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad, Male ($n = 150$) and Females ($n = 150$). Participants who were 25 to 45 ($M = 30.9$; $SD = 4.51$) years in age were included.

Assessment Tools

In this study, following three scientific scales with one demographic information form was used for the assessment. These measuring tools include:

- Demographic information sheet
- Partner Phubbing Scale
- Motives for Inducing Romantic Jealousy
- ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale

Demographic Information Sheet

Demographic information sheet was manually developed in order to collect information from the participants. The demographic sheet includes the Participants' age, gender, education, job status, profession, family system, duration of marriage and mobile phone usage (along with social media) of their partner (in hours).

Partner Phubbing Scale

Partner phubbing scale was developed by Roberts and David in [2016](#). The scale consisted of 9 items and participants rated themselves against five-point Likert scale on items. Items can be scored by adding the responses, it has Cronbach's alpha of 0.74.

Motives for Inducing Romantic Jealousy Scale

This scale was developed by Mattingly et al. in 2012. The scale consisted of 23 items where participants graded each item on a seven-point scale. Scoring can be done by summing all the items. The scale has reliability of 0.87.

ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale

The scale was developed by Fowers and Olson in [1993](#). This scale consists of 15 items which will be ranging from 5 point Likert scale. The positive and negative signs to the left of each item indicate whether the item should be scored in a positive or negative direction. Items scored in a negative direction would be reverse-scored. It has an alpha coefficient of .82.

Procedure

First of all, after approving the research topic by the supervisor and higher authority of University, permission was taken from the respective scales' authors for assessment measures. Before collecting the data, participants were asked by telling them the brief introduction of research as well as the purpose of the research and then asked them whether they would like to participate in it. The participants were informed that their information will remain confidential. When the participants agreed with it then a questionnaire was given to them along with an information sheet and informed consent. After collecting data from 50 participants physically, Google form was created because due to Covid-19, it was not possible to collect data physically. The link was shared in different groups of Facebook and Instagram. The time length to complete questionnaires was 15-20 minutes approximately. In this questionnaire, the researcher's email was mentioned because some participants want to know the findings of the research.

Ethical Considerations

- Permission from the authors of the scales was taken before using them.
- Informed consent was taken from the participants that clearly explain the purpose of research. The participation was voluntarily.
- The participants could drop out at any time they want without any cost or explanation.
- The participants' anonymity and confidentiality was ensured.
- It was ensured that participants weren't harmed in any way.
- The study procedures showed respect for cultural values and beliefs.
- Acknowledgement for the work of other authors used in any part of the thesis was referenced in an APA format. Results were reported accurately.

- Any sort of deception was not used in the research.
- Participants were given contact information so they can contact if they have any query.

Results

The purpose of the study was to find partner phubbing, romantic jealousy and marital satisfaction among married individuals. In first step reliability analysis of all scales were computed using Cronbach's alpha. All variables showed good reliability. In second step Pearson product moment correlation was computed in order to evaluate relationship among the variables. In third step t-test was applied to examine difference between the variables. In fourth step hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis was carried out to examine prediction among partner phubbing and marital satisfaction.

Table 1

Reliability Analysis of Scales (N = 300)

Measures	k	M(SD)	Range		α
			Actual	Potential	
Partner Phubbing	9	26.81(6.57)	9-45	12-43	.74
Romantic Jealousy	23	86.44(24.52)	23-161	34-158	.87
Marital Satisfaction	15	57.06(10.06)	15-75	17-76	.82

Partner phubbing scale and marital satisfaction scale produced a good internal reliability while Romantic jealousy scale showed an excellent internal reliability. Cronbach's alpha for partner phubbing scale ($M=26.81$, $SD = 6.57$) was found to be .74, then Cronbach's alpha for Romantic jealousy scale ($M = 86.44$, $SD = 24.52$) was .87. Similarly, Cronbach's alpha value for Marital satisfaction scale ($M = 57.06$, $SD = 10.06$) was .82.

Table 2

Correlation between Partner Phubbing, Romantic Jealousy and Marital Satisfaction among Married Individuals (N=300)

Variables	Age	Gender	Education	Job status	PP	RJ	MS
Age	-	.33***	.06	-.32***	.00	-.04	-.07
Gender		-	-.02	-.63***	-.05	-.08	.06
Education			-	-.17**	.17**	.08	-.02
Job status				-	-.08	.04	-.02

Variables	Age	Gender	Education	Job status	PP	RJ	MS
PP					-	.40***	-.35***
RJ						-	-.50***
MS							-

Note. PP = partner phubbing, RJ = romantic jealousy, MS = marital satisfaction. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

The results of Pearson moment correlation showed partner phubbing was found to be significantly positively correlated with romantic jealousy whereas partner phubbing was found to be significantly negatively correlated with marital satisfaction. Furthermore, Romantic jealousy was found to be negatively associated with marital satisfaction.

Table 3

Multiple Hierarchical Regression Predicting Marital Satisfaction

Predictors	Marital satisfaction			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	ΔR^2	β
Step 1			.004	-
Gender	1.06	1.10	-	.07
Education	-.19	1.00	-	-.01
Family System	.35	.86	-	.02
Job status	.33	1.19	-	.02
Step 2			.12	-
Partner phubbing	-.39	.06	-	-.36***
Step 3			.15	-
Romantic jealousy	-.13	.02	-	-.43***
Total R^2			.28	-
$F(7,292)$			24.82***	

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

The Multiple Hierarchical Regression was conducted to identify the predictors of marital satisfaction from partner phubbing and romantic jealousy. The result showed that overall variance of marital satisfaction was 28% with $F = 24.82 (7, 292)$, $p < .000$. The results indicated that partner phubbing is a negative predictor of marital satisfaction ($\beta = -.36$, $p = .000$). The results also revealed that romantic jealousy ($\beta = -.43$, $p < .000$) is also negative predictor of marital satisfaction.

Discussion

The first hypothesis of the present study investigated that partner phubbing will be related with the decrease in Marital satisfaction. The hypothesis was accepted. The results revealed that there was a negative relationship between partner phubbing and marital satisfaction. Researchers suggested a pathway where the utilization of technology impacts one's satisfaction with and conflict during time spent together, and afterward this disappointment and conflict affects every day relationship quality (McDaniel et al., [2020](#)).

The second hypothesis of the present study investigated that partner phubbing will likely to increase Romantic jealousy among married individuals. According to the results, the relationship between partner phubbing and romantic jealousy, reduced personal well-being, was found to be positive significant as mentioned in table 1. Thus the hypothesis was accepted. Past literature showed that partner phubbing has downstream adverse consequences on well-being through romantic jealousy, however just among anxiously appended people (David & Roberts, [2021](#)).

The third hypothesis of the present study investigated that Romantic jealousy will be associated with decrease in Marital Satisfaction. The hypothesis was accepted. Results revealed that Romantic jealousy was found to be negatively associated with marital satisfaction. Literature showed that romantic jealousy is frequently linked with harming impacts; cognitive jealousy and reconnaissance practices were related with relationship disappointment and romantic jealousy was likewise directly connected with relationship dissatisfaction (Elphinston et al., [2013](#)).

The fourth hypothesis of the present study investigated that males are more likely to phub as compared to females. After performing t-test, the results showed that there were no gender differences found between partner phubbing, romantic jealousy and marital satisfaction. Thus the hypothesis was rejected. Research showed that it isn't predictable with some new research showing that female focuses of phubbing experience more subjective pain than male targets (Hales et al., [2018](#)).

The fifth hypothesis of the present study was that partner phubbing and romantic jealousy are likely to predict marital satisfaction among married couples. The results indicated that partner phubbing and romantic jealousy are significant negative predictors of marital satisfaction.. However, the results supported this hypothesis. Previous literature suggested that partner

phubbing conduct in romantic relationships is related with expanded feelings of jealousy, which is identified with fulfillment in romantic relationships (Kransova et al., [2016](#)).

Limitations

- To collect data for the current study, online questionnaire was used due to COVID-19 which was time consuming and a bit lengthy.
- Data collected was from few cities of Pakistan (Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore only).
- As the measuring tools were taken from western culture, some of the participants reported that the statements were quite personal.

Recommendations

- It is recommended for future studies that Indigenous tools must be designed and used for measuring partner phubbing and romantic jealousy.
- Present study was explored through self-report measures. Future studies should include in depth interviews, discussions for diversity in results.
- Phubbing should be analyzed on different sample as well such as friends, family relationships and among teachers and students specifically in Pakistan.
- Future studies should also explore other aspects and effects of phubbing on married life.
- Future studies should evaluate cross-cultural differences i.e. phubbing in individuals living in western countries should be compared to those lives in Asian countries.

Implications

- Current research implies in the field of media psychology to interrogate the impact of the excessive use modern technologies in social life
- This research could be beneficial to practitioners, therapists and clinicians, as they can ask questions about the use of Social Networking Sites (SNS) to increase relationship satisfaction in married life (Couple therapy).
- This study can be helpful for arranging awareness programs and strategies to stop phubbing and improve marital relationships.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the relationship between partner phubbing, romantic jealousy and marital satisfaction. The study investigated that partner phubbing was found to be significantly positively correlated with romantic jealousy whereas; romantic jealousy was also found to be significantly positively associated partner phubbing. Partner phubbing and romantic jealousy was found to be significantly negatively associated with marital satisfaction. However, partner phubbing was found to be significantly positively predicted marital satisfaction. Results also showed that an increase in partner phubbing tends to increase romantic jealousy which in turn lowers marital satisfaction.

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