

Phubbing behaviour and phubbing aversion in the context of parent-child interaction

INTRODUCTION

An important communication tool for parents and their children, the smartphone potentially disturbs their face-to-face interactions in a family context, a phenomenon referred to as '*parent – child phubbing*' (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016; Roberts & David, 2016). 'Phubbing' indicates the issue of ignoring conversational partners in favor of one's smartphone (Aagaard, 2019). Consequently, parental smartphone use around their children is often associated with fewer parent-child interactions, relationship dissatisfaction, communication problems and lower personal well-being (Radesky et al., 2015; Roberts & David, 2016).

In this study we propose that parents *and* children can be considered both as '*phubbers*' and as '*phubbees*'. This can be explained from a 'social learning' perspective, since children are prone to copy parent's behaviour (Bandura & Walters, 1977; Derks, Van Duin, Tims, & Bakker, 2015; Jago et al., 2013). This could mean that children show more phubbing behaviour when their parent also does so. However, children being digital natives, it is also possible that parents who are confronted with their child's smartphone use – and probably also phubbing behaviour – are more prone as well to show increased smartphone use and phubbing behaviour.

METHOD

Flemish parents of a child older than 12 – each time one parent per family – were asked to fill out a survey, questioning phubbing behaviour and phubbing aversion. They had to answer questions about themselves and about one of their children from the parental perspective. In total, 210 persons completed the survey. The parents were on average 44.74 years old, 17.14 % (n = 36) of them fathers. Their children were on average 14.80 years old and 52.38 % (n = 110) of them were girls.

The questionnaire examined: (1) parents' own perceived phubbing behaviour (*parental phubbing behaviour*), (2) children's phubbing behaviour as perceived by the parent (*children's phubbing behaviour*) (Roberts and David, 2016; Andreassen et al., 2012), (3) perceived parental aversion towards children's phubbing behaviour (*parental phubbing aversion*), and (4) children's aversion towards parental phubbing behaviour, as perceived by the parent (*children's phubbing aversion*).

RESULTS

Two models were tested. In the first model, the dependent variables were *children's phubbing behaviour* and *children's phubbing aversion* (see Fig 1A), while the second model included *parental phubbing behaviour* and *parental phubbing aversion* as dependent variables (see Fig 1B). In both models, *parental phubbing behaviour* correlated negatively to *parental phubbing aversion* ($r = -0.36, p < 0.001$), just as *children's phubbing behaviour* to *children's phubbing aversion* ($r = -0.30, p < 0.001$).

'Model 1' (Fig 1A) was made up of parental variables as predictors and children's variables as dependent variables. The first multiple regression showed that *children's phubbing behaviour* was significantly predicted by *parental phubbing behaviour* and *parental phubbing aversion*, as $F(2, 207) = 7.52, p = 0.001, R^2 = 0.06$. The second multiple regression showed that *children's phubbing aversion* was significantly predicted by *parental phubbing aversion*, but not by *parental phubbing behaviour*, $F(2, 207) = 10.66, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.09$.

The other way around, 'model 2' (Fig 1B) was made up of parental variables as dependent ones, and children's variables as predictors. The first multiple regression showed that *parental phubbing behaviour* was not significantly predicted by *children's phubbing behaviour* and *children's phubbing aversion*, $F(2, 207) = 1.93, p = 0.15 > 0.05$. The other multiple regression showed that *parental phubbing aversion* was significantly predicted by *children's phubbing behaviour* and *children's phubbing aversion*, $F(2, 207) = 18.25, p < 0.001$.

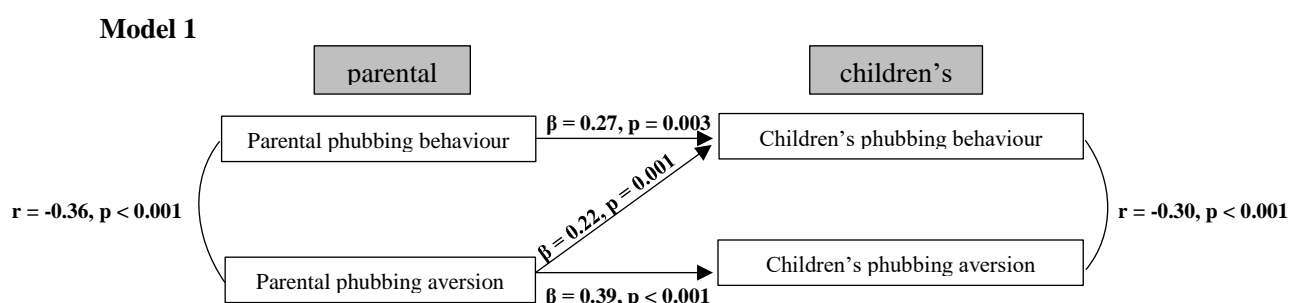


Fig 1A. Model 1 with children's phubbing behaviour and children's phubbing aversion as dependent variables, and parental phubbing behaviour and phubbing aversion as factors. This model was examined via two multiple regressions.

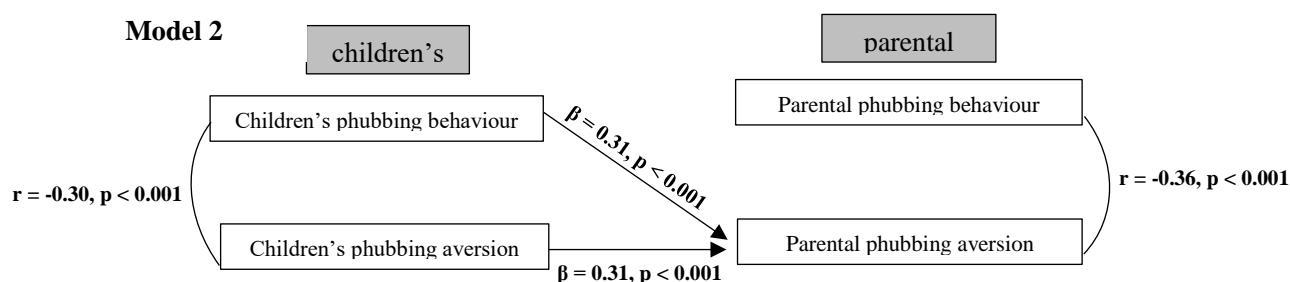


Fig 1B. Model 2 with parental phubbing behaviour and parental phubbing aversion as dependent variables, and children's phubbing behaviour and phubbing aversion as factors. This model was examined via two multiple regressions.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Children seem to ‘socially learn’ both phubbing behaviour and phubbing aversion from their parents. Their parents must therefore be aware of their role model. By contrast, parents seem to ‘socially learn’ phubbing aversion, but not phubbing behaviour. Along with the significant negative correlations in both groups between their phubbing behaviour and phubbing aversion, parent-child communication about phubbing aversion can probably be linked to more phubbing aversion of the other party and indirectly lead to decreased phubbing behaviour of the other party. Nevertheless, parental phubbing aversion does not lead to decreased phubbing behaviour in children and can be positively explained by children’s phubbing behaviour.

Further research can be conducted with an expanded sample size and in a dyadic way, rather than only from the parental perspective. The plausible role of open communication could also be further examined, as well as the potential influences of parental characteristics and those of their children, for example higher smartphone use, compulsive internet use, FoMO, ...

REFERENCES

- Aagaard, J. (2019). Digital akrasia: A qualitative study of phubbing. *AI & SOCIETY*.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-019-00876-0>
- Bandura, A., & Walters, R. H. (1977). *Social learning theory* (Vol. 1). Prentice-hall
 Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- Chotpitayasunondh, V., & Douglas, K. M. (2016). How “phubbing” becomes the norm: The antecedents and consequences of snubbing via smartphone. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 63, 9–18. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.05.018>
- Derks, D., Van Duin, D., Tims, M., & Bakker, A. B. (2015). Smartphone use and work-home interference: The moderating role of social norms and employee work engagement. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 88(1), 155–177.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12083>
- Jago, R., Sebire, S. J., Lucas, P. J., Turner, K. M., Bentley, G. F., Goodred, J. K., Fox, K. R. (2013). Parental modelling, media equipment and screen-viewing among young

children: Cross-sectional study. *BMJ Open*, 3(4), e002593.

<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2013-002593>

Radesky, J., Miller, A. L., Rosenblum, K. L., Appugliese, D., Kaciroti, N., & Lumeng, J. C.

(2015). Maternal Mobile Device Use During a Structured Parent–Child Interaction Task. *Academic Pediatrics*, 15(2), 238–244.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acap.2014.10.001>

Roberts, J. A., & David, M. E. (2016). My life has become a major distraction from my cell phone: Partner phubbing and relationship satisfaction among romantic partners.

Computers in Human Behavior, 54, 134–141.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.07.058>