

Life Satisfaction as a Predictor of Phubbing in College Students

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ABSTRACT

Phubbing, or phone snubbing, refers to the tendency of individuals to ignore people around them by focusing excessively on their mobile phones. This phenomenon is increasingly common among college students, who are among the highest users of the internet and smartphones in Indonesia. Previous research indicates that psychological factors, particularly life satisfaction, may influence phubbing behavior. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether life satisfaction can predict phubbing among college students. This research employed a quantitative approach with a causal-correlational design. A total of 200 students aged 18–25 years were recruited using a convenience sampling technique. Life satisfaction was measured with the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), while phubbing was assessed using the Phubbing Scale. Both instruments showed adequate levels of validity and reliability. Data were collected through online questionnaires and analyzed using simple linear regression after classical assumption tests were met. The results indicate that life satisfaction does not significantly predict phubbing behavior, either in overall phubbing scores or in its dimensions of communication disturbance and phone obsession. These findings suggest that life satisfaction alone cannot explain the occurrence of phubbing, and other psychological factors such as loneliness and flow may play a more critical role. In conclusion, life satisfaction is not a predictor of phubbing among Indonesian college students. Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on digital behavior and positive psychology. Practically, the findings provide insights for educators, parents, and policymakers to design strategies that address phubbing behavior more effectively.

KEYWORDS life-satisfaction; phubbing; cellphone



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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays in Indonesia, internet users are increasing. Based on the results of the Nielsen Indonesia survey, in 2022, internet users in Indonesia reached 76.7% in the third quarter (Dewi, 2022; Annur, 2022). According to Pahlevi (2022), the age group of 19-34 years has the highest internet penetration rate of 98.64%. This age group mostly consists of students and workers. The most used applications, according to the results of the study, are WhatsApp (99.6%), followed by Instagram (98%), and YouTube (87.2%). Students use social media to find information (91.4%), as a means of communication (64.6%), and to relieve boredom (62.1%) (Andriani & Sulistyorini, 2022).

In the context of high-intensity social media use, there is a concept that has been widely researched lately, namely phone-snubbing or known as *phubbing*. *Phubbing* refers to an individual who focuses on his or her cell phone or smartphone while talking to another person, being very centered on the smartphone, and detaching from interpersonal communication. Karadağ et al. (2015) also stated that *phubbing* is a concept in which an individual shows disrespect towards other individuals who are communicating with him, ignores them, and prioritizes the virtual environment over the real environment (Karadağ et al., 2015).

When *phubbing*, the individual focuses on the smartphone and avoids interaction with people around them. In college students, *phubbing* can be found when they are with their family, friends, studying, or during meetings that require interaction (Al-Saggaf & O'Donnell, 2019). At gatherings, according to Yam and Kumcağız (2020), students tend to surf on their smartphones rather than interact directly with people around them (Putri et al., 2022; Yam & Kumcağız, 2020).

The impact of *phubbing* has been studied previously; among others, Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas (2018a) found that *phubbing* affects the quality of

communication and relationship satisfaction in students. Rachman, Rusandi, and Setiawan stated that *phubbing* has a significant effect on academic procrastination among students. This result was also confirmed by similar studies (P, 2023). Amelia, Sari, and Despitasi (2019) suggested that *phubbing* can also impact student health problems. Additionally, research by Tekkam, Bala, and Pandve (2020) found that *phubbing* has consequences for psychological distress in college students. Some of the negative impacts of *phubbing* that have been researched indicate the need to identify factors that determine *phubbing* behavior so that prevention or reduction efforts can be undertaken. One of the factors studied in relation to *phubbing* in college students is life satisfaction (Cikrikci et al., 2019; Fingerless, 2021; Polat & Karasu, 2022).

Students are in the stage of *emerging adulthood* (Arnett, 2018). This period is marked by various important events, including graduating from high school, leaving home, finding a job, and eventually finding a life partner to form a family. During this period, individuals must make decisions related to education, career, and family to fulfill their role as mature adults. Given the many important decisions that must be made, one critical aspect at this time is life satisfaction (Switek & Easterlin, 2018; Hollifield & Conger, 2015). According to Hollifield and Conger (2015), life satisfaction during this period is important because it promotes positive psychological functioning and prevents risky behaviors, especially when individuals must make significant life choices. Therefore, it is important to study life satisfaction in students.

Life satisfaction is the cognitive component of subjective well-being. Individuals evaluate their life satisfaction in areas such as work, school, and family. Life satisfaction has several indicators, including the desire to change one's life, satisfaction with life at present, satisfaction with life in the past, satisfaction with the future, and significant others' assessments of one's life. According to Diener et al. (2017) and Çakar and Karatas (2017), individuals who are satisfied with their lives tend to enjoy life more, experience more positive emotions, have higher self-esteem, and maintain a more optimistic outlook on life. When students are satisfied with their lives, their needs are relatively met, allowing them to enjoy life more and feel positive emotions. Positive emotions enable them to pay better attention to others, rather than ignoring those around them because their focus is not solely on their internal state. Doktorová, Hubinská, and Masár (2020) also found a significant link between life satisfaction and empathy. This suggests that people who are satisfied with their lives also possess higher empathy skills. Thus, it is hoped that the tendency to ignore others while using smartphones (*phubbing*) will be lower.

The research by Çikrikci, Griffiths, and Erzen (2019) revealed a negative relationship between life satisfaction and *phubbing* in students at Turkish universities. This finding aligns with Parmaksiz (2021), who found a significant relationship between *phubbing* and life satisfaction in adults with depressive symptoms. Błachnio and Quail (2019) also found in a study in Poland, covering ages 16-78, that *phubbers* (people who *phub*) were less satisfied with their lives and felt lonelier than others. Meanwhile, Ergun, Goksu, and Chewing gum (2020) found that life satisfaction could predict *phubbing* in adult respondents aged 23-43 in Turkey.

Based on the phenomenon and results of previous research showing that life satisfaction is important for students and correlates with *phubbing*, the researcher is interested in exploring the extent to which life satisfaction can predict *phubbing* behavior in students. Previous research included respondents with a relatively broad age range and rarely focused exclusively on students; meanwhile, in Indonesia, this age range includes the highest internet users. Research linking these two variables in the Indonesian context is still rare. Therefore, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the development of knowledge in positive psychology, social sciences, and education, especially regarding life satisfaction

and *phubbing* behavior among students. The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which life satisfaction can predict *phubbing* behavior in students. The hypothesis is that life satisfaction can predict *phubbing* in college students.

This research has two main benefits. Theoretically, it contributes to the development of knowledge in positive psychology and digital behavior by providing new insights into the relationship between life satisfaction and *phubbing* among students. Practically, the findings can serve as a reference for educators, parents, and policymakers in designing interventions and strategies to reduce *phubbing* behavior in students, thereby maintaining and improving the quality of interpersonal communication, academic achievement, and psychological well-being.

METHOD

This research employed a quantitative research approach with a causal correlational design, aiming to measure the extent to which life satisfaction predicts *phubbing*. The respondents in this study were students aged 18-25 years, selected using the convenience sampling technique. Life satisfaction was measured using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) questionnaire. Meanwhile, to measure *phubbing*, the Phubbing Scale was used. To test the reliability of both measuring instruments, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.755 for the SWLS and 0.750 for the Phubbing Scale. Construct validity was tested using Pearson's product-moment correlation. The validity coefficients for the SWLS ranged from 0.610 to 0.841, while those for the Phubbing Scale ranged from 0.411 to 0.748. The questionnaire was created in the form of a Google Form and distributed to students from various universities. The questionnaire included a letter of consent on the first page, which allowed respondents to discontinue the process if they did not wish to participate. The statistical analysis technique used was simple linear regression.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The processing of demographic data is described as follows in table 1:

Table 1. Gender and Age

Demography	n	%
Gender		
Man	29	14,5%
Woman	171	85,5%
Total	200	100%
Age		
18-19 (<i>late adolescent</i>)	88	44,0%
20-24 (<i>early adulthood</i>)	112	56.0%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2025

Based on table 1, it appears that the majority of respondents are women and are between the ages of 20-24 or *early adulthood*. Next is the exposure of descriptive results from *the life satisfaction* (LS) category, in table 2, and *Phubbing* in table 3.

Table 2. Category *Life Satisfaction*

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Tall	109	54.5
Low	91	45.5
Total	200	100.0

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2025

In table 2, it appears that the majority of students who responded to this study have high LS

Table 3. Category *Phubbing*

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Tall	115	57.5
Low	54	42.5
Total	200	100.0

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2025

Table 3 reveals that the majority of college students have *high phubbing*.

Next, the results of a simple linear test will be presented, but previously preceded by the results of the classical assumption test as follows: no multicollinearity occurs ($VIF = 1,000 < 10$); there is no heteroscedasticity between the LS and Phubbing variables (the scatterplot scatter spreads above, below and around point 0, does not cluster just above or below the line, nor does the dot spread be unpatterned, and does not form a widening-narrowing-widening pattern anymore; and the data is normally distributed (with the value of Asymp. Sig= $0.062 > 0.05$). With these results, it is concluded that the requirements for the linear regression test have been met.

Table 4. Linear Regression Test Results

Model Summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.024a	.001	-.004	4.655	1.935
a. Predictors: (Constant). THEM					
b. Dependent Variable: Phubbing					

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2025

Exposure to the data (table 4) shows that the contribution of LS to *Phubbing* is relatively weak, which is 0.001 or 0.1%, the rest is influenced by other variables that are not measured in this study.

Table 5. Results of the Ls significance test on *Phubbing*

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Itself.
1	Regression	6.702	1	6.702	.115	.735b
	Residual	11573.173	198	58.450		

Total	11579.875	199
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a. Dependent Variable: Phubbing

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2025

The significance test shown in table 5 shows that the contribution of LS to Phubbing is insignificant (sign > 0.01).

Next, the results of the LS linear regression test on both aspects of Phubbing, namely Communication Disturbance (CD) and Phone Obsession (PO) will be presented. The results of the LS linear regression test on the Communication Disturbance (CD) aspect, are shown in table 6.

Table 6. LS Linear Regression Test Results on CD

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.047 ^a	.002	-.003	5.150
a. Predictors: (Constant), Life Satisfaction				
b. Dependent Variable: Communication Disturbance (CD)				

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2025

Based on the data in table 6, it appears that LS contributes weakly to *communication disturbance*, which is 0.002 or 0.2%, the rest is influenced by other variables that are not measured in this study.

Table 7. LS significance test on CD

ANOVA					
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
1	Regression	11.840	1	11.840	.446
	Residual	5251.180	198	26.521	
	Total	5263.020	199		

a. Dependent Variable: Communication Disturbance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Life Satisfaction

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2025

The significance test in table 7 states that the contribution of LS to CD is not significant (sign > 0.01). Next, a table of the results of the LS linear regression test on *the aspect of Phone Obsession* (PO) will be presented in table 8.

Table 8. LS Linear Regression Test Results on Phone Obsession (PO)

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.014 ^a	.000	-.005	4.299
a. Predictors: (Constant), Life Satisfaction				
b. Dependent Variable: Phone Obsession				

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2025

Based on the data in table 8, it appears that LS contributes weakly to PO, which is 0.000 or 0.0%, the rest is influenced by other variables that are not measured in this study

Table 9. Results of the LS significance test on PO
ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Itself.
1	Regression	.726	1	.726	.039	.843b
	Residual	3659.069	198	18.480		
	Total	3659.795	199			

a. Dependent Variable: Phone Obsession

b. Predictors: (Constant), Life Satisfaction

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2025

The significance test in table 9 illustrates that the contribution of LS to PO is insignificant (sign > 0.01).

From the results of data processing presented in tables 4 to 9, it appears that *life satisfaction* does not contribute to *phubbing*. This means that LS is not a predictor of *phubbing* behavior in students. Students who live high life satisfaction do not necessarily do *phubbing*. Meanwhile, students who are not satisfied with their lives are also not necessarily active in *phubbing*. The descriptive data in tables 2 and 3 provide results that support the results of the study. In table 2, it can be seen that the majority of students who responded to this study have high LS, meaning that most of them are satisfied with their lives. However, in table 3, the majority of students also have *high phubbing*, meaning they tend to be high in using *phones* that ignore interaction with their environment.

The findings of this study differ from the study of Ergün, Göksu, & Sakız (2020) which revealed that *phubbing* is significantly predicted by *life satisfaction*. Research by Çikrikci, Griffiths & Erzen (2019) also revealed that there is a significant negative relationship between *life satisfaction* and *phubbing*.

The absence of the contribution of *life satisfaction* to *phubbing* in this study is still in line with . Yam (2022) stated that there was no significant relationship between Yam (2022) *phubbing partners* and *life satisfaction*. Maftai & Măirean (2023) It was also found that there was no significant relationship between *phubbing* and *life satisfaction*, but *loneliness* was found to be a mediator between the two. So the relationship between *phubbing* and *life satisfaction* does not occur directly, but through *loneliness*. Individuals who experience *loneliness*, even though they are satisfied with their life, may still do *phubbing* to overcome their *loneliness*. This means that *loneliness* should be an important concern, as a factor that also influences *phubbing behavior*.

The results of LS data processing on aspects of *phubbing*, namely *communication disturbance* and *phone obsession*, also showed that there was no LS contribution to the two aspects of *phubbing*. This means that LS is also not a predictor for both aspects of *phubbing*. This is not in line with their findings Błachnio & Quail (2019) stating that *phubbing* is caused by *communication disturbances* and *phone obsession*. In their model, individuals with low *self-esteem*, high *loneliness*, and low *life-satisfaction* were at high risk of overusing *social*

networking sites (especially *Facebook*) and obsessed with the use of *smartphones*, which could result in *phubbing behavior* in real face-to-face situations with other people. However, Pearson dkk. (2023) it states that *flow* can be a mediator between problematic phone use and life satisfaction. *Phubbing* is a type of *problematic phone* use. Problematic *phone* use is negatively related to *flow*, because problematic phone use can reduce a person's attention and concentration when studying or interacting with others. On the other hand, a *flowing* person is a person who intensely gives full attention and concentration to what is being faced at that time. People who *are in flux* with their activities at that time, will not use *their phones* excessively. So people who are *flowing* will not *phubbing*, when they are interacting directly with other people. In addition, Pearson et al (2023) stated that *flow* is positively related to *life satisfaction*, meaning that people who *flow* will have high life satisfaction, and vice versa. A person who is satisfied with his life will also show that there is *flow* in him. Students who are satisfied with their lives, can focus their energy and attention to enjoy and immerse themselves in their tasks and roles during lectures (*flow*), and also when communicating face-to-face with others, so that they are not easily distracted by excessive *phone* use. This means that there is no contribution to *life satisfaction* in both *aspects of phubbing*, possibly related to the existence of *flow variables* that have not been taken into account in this study.

The results of demographic data processing and *phubbing* showed that there was *no significant correlation* between sex and *phubbing* ($p > 0.05$; $\chi^2 = -0.075$). This means that neither male nor female students showed any difference in their *phubbing* behavior. These results are not in line with those who suggest that gender is one of the determinants of Montenegro dkk (2015) *phubbing*, women show *higher phubbing* behavior than men. However, the results of this study are still supportive which reveals that there is no difference in Welcome dkk (2020) *phubbing* between men and women.

In addition, age and *phubbing* were also not correlated ($p > 0.05$; $r = -0.111$), meaning that *phubbing behavior* was not determined by the age of the student. These findings are not in line with the findings of Schneider (2021) who revealed that age is negatively related to *phubbing*.

CONCLUSION

The results of data processing showed that life satisfaction was not a predictor of *phubbing*, nor of either aspect of *phubbing*. This condition is suspected to be related to loneliness and flow, factors that were not taken into account and represent limitations of this study. For future research, it is recommended to also consider the conditions of loneliness and student flow.

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