

Chapter 7

Factors Related to Phone Snubbing Behavior in Emerging Adults: The Phubbing Phenomenon

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ABSTRACT

Smartphones are a fundamental part of emerging adults' life. The aim of this chapter is to determine which factors play a role in "phubbing" during emerging adulthood as well as to propose and test a model of this phenomenon. We tested a model of relations between phubbing, self-esteem, self-control, well-being, and internet addiction. The following measures were used: the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale, the Brief Self-Control Scale (BSCS), the Flourishing Scale, the Internet Addiction Scale, and the Phubbing Scale. The participants in the online study were 640 Italian emerging adults (526 females and 114 males), ranging in age from 18 to 29 ($M = 21.7$, $SD = 2.18$). The results showed that the model was well fitted, particularly in postulating that a decrease in the level of self-control is related to an increase in Internet addiction, that an increase in Internet addiction increases the probability of phubbing behavior, and that the level of self-esteem and well-being do not affect Internet addiction. Gender differences, in favor of males, occurred only in self-esteem.

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INTRODUCTION

The Internet is an important part of our daily lives. It is a basic tool for finding information, social interactions, and the consequent construction of knowledge (Frozzi & Mazzoni, 2011; Mazzoni & Zanazzi, 2014). The evolution of the Internet has been accompanied by profound changes in the type of devices used to access it, including tablets, laptops, and smartphones. Web 2.0 has revolutionized the traditional ways of communicating, allowing easy access to an unprecedented amount of data and enabling the spread of news in real time (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Millions of people have chosen to interact by means of virtual platforms such as blogs, social networks, chat, and e-mail rather than face to face, which generally requires more time and effort (Lee, 2014). Particularly the use of smartphones and mobile phones is an integral part of people's lives. In Italy, the number of smartphone users in 2018 was estimated at 33.3 million (Statista, 2018). Moreover, according to Pew Research Center (2015), 15% of Americans aged 18–29 are dependent on a smartphone for Internet access. According to Kempt (2015), smartphones account for more than 50% of active communication handsets worldwide. Thanks to their portability, smartphones tend to be preferred to computers for surfing the Internet and have become an integral part of people's daily lives (Jones, 2014; Oulasvirta, Rattenbury, Ma, & Raita, 2012; Roberts, Yaya, & Manolis, 2014). The possibility of being continuously connected increases the amount of the time spent online through mobile devices. Besides calling, texting, and basic Internet browsing, smartphones are used for online banking, seeking information about jobs, obtaining class materials or educational contents, and many other purposes (Blachnio & Przepiorka, 2018).

With the increasing number of smartphones, the benefits and side effects of using them should be discussed (Blachnio & Przepiorka, 2018). Researchers have become increasingly interested in the smartphone's potential for social interactions (Baron & Campbell, 2012; Campbell & Kwak, 2010; Cholz, 2010; Ha, Chin, Park, Ryu, & Yu, 2008; Khan, 2008; Lee, Chang, Lin, & Cheng, 2014). Some studies have suggested that smartphone use can be positive (connections are very important for receiving and sharing information; Smetaniuk, 2014), while others suggest that the use of social networking sites (SNSs) may lead to negative outcomes (Holmgren & Coyne, 2017; Steinfield, Ellison, & Lampe, 2008), which in turn may lead to Internet addiction. More and more people are developing problematic smartphone use, which gives rise to concern about the potential consequences of smartphone overuse (Beranuy, Oberst, Carbonell, & Chamarro, 2009).

This could be particularly relevant during emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000; 2015), when the use of the smartphone and online connections is particularly important due to the residential changes typical of this life stage (Mazzoni & Iannone, 2014). Emerging adults' SNS use through smartphones happens when they are all together

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