

## Parental Phubbing And Adolescent Loneliness: A Study Of Digital Neglect In Families

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### Abstract

The use of mobile phones by parents is believed to be a factor that can trigger family distance and adolescent psychological issues. The phenomenon of parental phubbing has emerged, a form of neglect involving the use of mobile phones during parenting, which is believed to impact various psychological aspects, including feelings of loneliness. This study aims to determine the extent of the influence of parental phubbing on adolescent loneliness using a quantitative research design with a regression model. The study participants consisted of 168 adolescents in Malang City who live with their parents and are aged between 12 and 21 years. The measurement of the parental phubbing variable employed a phubbing scale modified from the Generic Scale of Being Phubbed (GSBP), while the loneliness measurement utilized a modified scale from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Loneliness Scale, Version 3. The modified scale's validity was assessed through content validity using Aiken's  $V$  and readability tests, construct validity with factor analysis, and reliability testing by calculating the alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficient. The results of the regression analysis showed that parental phone neglect influenced adolescent loneliness ( $F = .837, p = .742; \beta = .130, p = .007; R^2 = .04$ ). This study found that mobile phone usage has an impact on child psychology. Parents are advised to pay attention to mobile phone usage during family interactions.

### Abstrak

Penggunaan ponsel pada orang tua diyakini menjadi faktor yang dapat memicu renggangnya kedekatan keluarga serta permasalahan psikologis remaja. Muncul fenomena *parental phubbing*, suatu bentuk pengabaian dengan menggunakan ponsel terhadap pengasuhan yang dilakukan orang tua dan diyakini dapat berdampak pada berbagai aspek psikologis termasuk di antaranya perasaan kesepian. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui sejauh mana pengaruh dari *parental phubbing* terhadap perasaan kesepian remaja dengan menggunakan desain penelitian kuantitatif dengan model regresi. Partisipan penelitian terdiri dari 168 remaja di Kota Malang yang tinggal bersama orang tua dan berusia 12–21 tahun. Pengukuran variabel *parental phubbing* menggunakan skala *phubbing* yang dimodifikasi dari Generic Scale of Being Phubbed (GSBP), sedangkan perasaan kesepian menggunakan skala hasil modifikasi dari University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Loneliness Scale Version-3. Pengujian hasil modifikasi skala menggunakan uji validitas isi dengan Aiken's  $V$  dan uji keterbacaan, uji validitas konstruk dengan analisis faktor, dan uji reliabilitas dengan menghitung koefisien alpha ( $\alpha$ ). Hasil analisis regresi menunjukkan bahwa pengabaian yang dilakukan orang tua dengan ponsel memiliki pengaruh terhadap perasaan kesepian remaja ( $F = 0.837, p = 0.742; \beta = 0.130, p = 0.007; R^2 = 0.04$ ). Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa terdapat pengaruh dari penggunaan ponsel terhadap perasaan kesepian remaja. Orang tua disarankan memperhatikan penggunaan ponsel dalam interaksi keluarga.



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## **INTRODUCTION**

Loneliness is an issue that can be experienced by anyone and has gained increasing attention in recent years (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2018). This feeling arises when an individual perceives a mismatch between the quality of social relationships they desire and what they experience (“The Good Childhood Report 2019,” 2019). Stickley and Koyanagi (2016) define loneliness as an unpleasant emotional state that stems from the perceived absence of desired interpersonal relationships. Individuals who feel lonely often experience isolation and deep sadness, as though they are living alone despite being surrounded by others (Lee et al., 2018). Prolonged experiences of loneliness tend to lead individuals to become withdrawn, shy, and face difficulties in building interpersonal relationships (Lee, 2009).

Adolescence is considered a period in which feelings of loneliness are believed to peak compared to other stages of life (Goosby et al., 2013). These feelings of loneliness often emerge due to the absence of significant figures such as parents and peers during a time when adolescents are trying to adapt to physical changes and social demands. Parents who fail to serve as positive figures and are unable to listen to their children’s emotions are one of the deeper causes of loneliness in adolescents (Nur & Daulay, 2021). The sense of loneliness becomes even more intense when children do not experience warmth in the family, particularly when parents are preoccupied with their activities and thus provide limited time and attention to their children (Sutanto & Suwartono, 2020).

Adolescents are required to navigate a wide range of complex developmental tasks compared to those in earlier stages of life. They are expected to adapt to physical changes, develop critical thinking skills, establish gender identity and interest in the opposite sex, and achieve socially responsible and independent behavior (McIntosh, 2003). In line with these demanding developmental challenges, adolescents require close interpersonal relationships with their parents and optimal positive support to help them transition smoothly through this period (Dariyo, 2004; Dewi & Hamidah, 2013). The quality of communication is essential in building emotional closeness between parents and their adolescent children (Nur & Daulay, 2021).

Maintaining effective communication with children has become a growing challenge for parents in the digital era. Technological advancement, while offering many conveniences, has also widened the gap between parents and children. A study by AVG Technologies (Brown, 2015) revealed children’s responses when their parents used mobile phones in their presence. The findings showed that 54% of children felt their parents checked their phones too frequently, and 32% felt neglected when their parents used their phones in their presence. Prolonged and frequent use of mobile phones by parents can lead to reduced satisfaction among children with their parents’ responsiveness (Hiniker et al., 2015). It can also impair parents’ ability to nurture and educate their children effectively (Boles & Roberts, 2008). If left unaddressed, parental phone use at home can lead to various problems, including lack of attention, reduced sense of responsibility, and diminished emotional warmth in parent-child interactions (Mackay et al., 2022). Moreover, excessive phone use has been associated with the emergence of maladaptive behaviors and internalizing problems among adolescents, such as depression, loneliness, and anxiety (Dixon et al., 2023).

A mini-survey conducted by Setiawan (2021) involving 670 mothers in Jabodetabek, Bandung, Surabaya, Medan, and several other cities found that mothers spent an average of 5 hours per day browsing the internet. More than 50% of that screen time, or approximately 3 hours, was spent on social media, while the remaining 2 hours were used for messaging. Parents in other countries also exhibited varying durations of internet use, ranging from 3 to 5 hours per day in Turkey (Yaman et al.,

2021), 7 hours in South Korea (Ali, 2022), and between 8 to 12 hours per day in the United States (Santhanam, 2016). Excessive internet use—especially more than 3 hours a day—once commonly associated with children, is now increasingly observed among parents (Ali, 2022).

Prolonged and excessive use of mobile phones by parents can reduce children's satisfaction with parental responsiveness (Hiniker et al., 2015) and impair parents' ability to nurture and educate their children effectively (Boles & Roberts, 2008). In addition, behaviors such as ignoring family phone calls, using phones during shared family moments, and mutual judgment through digital interactions have been identified as negative patterns arising from phone use at home (Annisa, 2022).

The term parental phubbing is now used to describe parental neglect of children due to mobile phone use. Phubbing is a combination of the words “phone” and “snubbing,” which can be understood as “being addicted to phones” (Hidayat, 2018). Excessive mobile phone use among parents can lead to changes in communication patterns and family interactions. Children whose parents frequently ignore them may feel alienated and perceive that their parents value their phones more than them (Wu et al., 2022). This can lead to lower-quality parent-child relationships and difficulty in forming healthy social relationships with peers (Puspitaloka & Syafitri, 2019).

Phubbing is a phenomenon of modern life in which individuals are compelled to devote more of their time to mobile phones, often at the expense of the people around them (Ducharme, 2018). The person who engages in phubbing is referred to as the phubber, typically someone who continuously checks their phone to access social media and neglects real-life social interactions. Meanwhile, the person who is subjected to phubbing is referred to as the phubbee. Phubbing behavior is characterized by a lack of active communication when individuals are engaged in social contact (Razumarda, 2022).

Parental phubbing refers to a form of parental neglect and a lack of emotional support toward children that results from parents' use of mobile phones during interactions (Niu et al., 2020). When parents engage in parental phubbing, children may feel alienated and perceive that the phone holds more value than themselves. This behavior can have detrimental effects on children's psychological well-being and emotional maturity (Wu et al., 2022). Parental communication and responsiveness play a central role in the development of children and adolescents, and the negative effects of phubbing are likely to be more pronounced when it occurs over an extended period (Pancani et al., 2021).

The phenomenon linking parental phubbing and loneliness can be explained through attachment theory, particularly in the context of parent-adolescent relationships (Moretti & Peled, 2004). This theory highlights how emotional connections between parents and their children during adolescence are built through regular communication and meaningful interaction (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). The emotional closeness between parents and children during adolescence is just as impactful as it is during childhood (Allen et al., 2003). A successful transition through adolescence does not occur through emotional detachment or avoidance of parents; rather, it is through secure attachment and emotionally responsive relationships that adolescents are better supported in their development toward adulthood (Moretti & Peled, 2004). Adolescents who share a secure bond with their parents are more likely to socialize easily and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships, which in turn helps protect them from feelings of loneliness (Weissman et al., 2005). In contrast, adolescents who experience phubbing from their parents tend to suffer emotional discomfort and feel neglected (Stockdale et al., 2018). When parents use their phones during interactions with their teenage children, they are, whether consciously or not, dividing their attention, weakening the emotional connection. This avoidant pattern of attachment may lead to loneliness, as adolescents feel disconnected from the very figures who are supposed to provide warmth and emotional support (Burns et al., 2022).

Prior research has identified a significant association between parental phubbing and increased levels of loneliness in children (Wang et al., 2022). Among adolescents, parental phubbing contributes to feelings of rejection and stress, which may lead to heightened loneliness (Liu et al., 2020). Adolescents with low self-esteem are particularly vulnerable, experiencing higher levels of loneliness as a result of being phubbed by their parents (Dong et al., 2023).

In Indonesia, existing research on parental phubbing has primarily focused on its relationship with children's internet addiction, as seen in studies by Mulyaningrum and Kusumaningrum (2022) and Sari and Purnomo (2024). However, these studies do not clarify whether the adolescents involved live with their parents, which is an important consideration since parental phubbing occurs specifically within the context of direct parent-child interaction. Another study explored phubbing behavior from the perspective of preadolescent children as perpetrators and its effect on the parent-child relationship within the family (Azizah, 2024). Thus, the correlation between parental phubbing and adolescent loneliness in the Indonesian context has yet to be systematically examined.

The phenomenon of parental phubbing is observable in daily interactions between parents and their adolescent children. When parents focus more on their mobile phones than on engaging with their children, the risk of loneliness in adolescents may increase. Therefore, this study proposes the hypothesis that there is a significant positive relationship between parental phubbing and adolescents' feelings of loneliness. The greater the level of parental phubbing experienced by adolescents, the higher their reported levels of loneliness. This research aims to provide a general overview of the link between parental phubbing and adolescent loneliness, and to serve as a foundation for interventions and educational efforts targeting parents.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a quantitative regression approach to examine the influence of parental phubbing on adolescents' feelings of loneliness in the city of Malang. The population in this study consisted of adolescents residing in Malang who were still living with their biological parents. The sampling method employed was non-probability sampling, utilizing a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a method in which participants are selected based on specific criteria relevant to the study (Sugiyono, 2018). The inclusion criteria were: (1) adolescents aged 12–21 years, and (2) currently living with their parents.

Data collection for this study took place during the school holiday period, from June 25 to July 16, 2023. Participants were recruited from various public locations in Malang, including Alun-Alun Kota Malang, Lapangan Rampal, Ijen Boulevard, and Qur'anic study gatherings. A total of 168 adolescents participated in this study. The minimum required sample size was calculated using the Lemeshow formula, with a maximum estimated proportion of 50% and a 10% margin of error, resulting in a minimum sample size of 96 participants.

Parental phubbing is defined as the child's perception of being ignored by their parents who are preoccupied with their mobile phones during interpersonal interactions. The aspects of parental phubbing were assessed using the general phubbing dimension, given that phubbing is regarded as a broad behavioral construct applicable across diverse contexts and demographic groups (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018). According to Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas, phubbing comprises three dimensions: (1) perceived norms, referring to the habitual use of mobile phones; (2) feeling ignored, referring to the subjective experience of being disregarded by others; and (3) interpersonal conflict, referring to conflicts that arise during interactions as a result of phubbing behavior.

Loneliness is defined as an individual's subjective feeling of being alone, characterized by a sense of emptiness and a feeling of being unwanted. According to Russell (1996), the developer of the

UCLA Loneliness Scale, loneliness comprises two dimensions: positive and negative emotions. Positive emotion relates to emotional responses when one is not feeling lonely, while negative emotion reflects emotional states associated with the experience of loneliness.

The parental phubbing scale used in this study is a modified version of the Generic Scale of Being Phubbed (GSBP) developed by Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas (2018). This scale consists of three dimensions: perceived norms (9 items), feelings of neglect (8 items), and interpersonal conflict (5 items). The lonely scale was adapted from the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, 1996), which consists of two dimensions: positive emotions (9 items) and negative emotions (11 items). The scale modification procedure followed the approach of Lee et al. (2018), which included the following stages: (1) translating the scale into the language used in the study, (2) conducting a readability check and content validity assessment by a panel of experts, (3) conducting a construct validity test, and (4) conducting a reliability analysis. Both measuring instruments were adapted and linguistically synthesized by two English language experts and reviewed by a panel of three experts to assess content validity using Aiken's  $V$  coefficient.

For the GSBP, 16 items obtained a perfect validity score of 1, 5 items obtained a score of .91, and 1 item obtained a score of .83. Meanwhile, the UCLA Loneliness Scale showed that 16 items obtained a score of 1, and 4 items obtained a score of .91. Based on Aiken's criteria (1985), a scale with 22 items evaluated by three panelists requires a minimum  $V$  coefficient of  $\geq .73$ , while a scale with 20 items obtains a minimum  $V$  coefficient of  $\geq .68$ . Since all Aiken's  $V$  values obtained ranged between .83 and 1, all scale items were declared content-valid.

To assess the construct validity and suitability of the GSBP and UCLA Loneliness Scale models, SPSS AMOS version 24 was used with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Items 1–4 of the perceived norm dimension of the GSBP had factor loadings below .50. In the UCLA Loneliness Scale, items with low factor loadings were items 3, 6, 7, 8, and 17. These items were then eliminated and removed from the reliability analysis because they did not correlate well with the scale dimensions and could potentially reduce the scale's reliability score (Ellis, 2017). The GFI values for the GSBP and UCLA Loneliness Scales were .81 and .85, respectively, indicating that both scales theoretically measure what they are designed to measure: parental phubbing and feelings of loneliness. The reliability values for both scales were .92 and .82, which are considered relatively high because they are close to 1 (Azwar, 2012).

## RESULTS

The sample in this study consisted of 168 participants, who were adolescents aged 12 to 21 years living with their parents. An explanation of the distribution of age, gender, and education level of the sample is presented in the following table.

Table 1.  
Characteristics of Research Participants

Research Sample	Frequency	%	Parental Phubbing		Loneliness	
			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age						
12 – 15	115	68.4%	43.51	15.17	48.32	48.32
16 – 18	35	20.8%	48.41	15.18	52.86	52.86
19 – 21	18	10.7%	45.37	10.05	45.75	45.75

Research Sample	Frequency	%	Parental Phubbing		Loneliness	
			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Gender						
Male	71	42.3%	32.33	14.72	34.71	7.99
Female	97	57.7%	34.47	13.94	36.50	7.61
<b>Total</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>100%</b>				

It can be seen that the largest group of participants in terms of age is the 12–15 years group, or early adolescents. The number of male and female participants is almost equal, with 71 males and 97 females, respectively. Participants aged 12–15 constitute the largest group, with 115 participants, followed by those aged 16–18, with 35 participants, and those aged 19–21, with 8 participants. There are differences in the variables of parental phubbing and feelings of loneliness across participant characteristics. Participants aged 16–18 have the highest average parental phubbing and feelings of loneliness, followed by participants aged 19–21, and then those aged 12–15. Based on gender, male participants have lower average parental phubbing and feelings of loneliness compared to female participants.

Table 2.  
Education Level and Family Completeness

Education Level	Frequency	Complete Family (Father and Mother, with or without Siblings)	Incomplete Family (Only Father or Mother, with or without Siblings)
Elementary School	8	7	1
Junior High School	81	70	11
Senior/Vocational School	37	31	6
University	15	11	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>21</b>

Based on data analysis from 168 participants, it was found that the majority of participants (70.8%) come from complete families, meaning they live with both parents (father and mother), with or without siblings. Meanwhile, 29.2% of the participants come from incomplete families, living with only one parent (father or mother), with or without siblings. This finding suggests that the complete family structure remains dominant across all educational levels, although the proportion of incomplete families tends to increase with higher levels of education.

Table 3.  
Categorization of Research Variable Attributes

Category	Parental Phubbing		Loneliness		Correlation ( <i>r</i> )
	Data Distribution	Percentage	Data Distribution	Percentage	
High	28	16.00 %	19	11.30%	.949
Moderate	123	73.21 %	124	73.80%	.948
Low	17	10.11 %	25	14.88%	.814

*Note.* Significant at the .001 level ( $p = .000$ )

The results of the mean categorization of the parental phubbing variable show that 28 participants (16%) fall into the high category, 123 participants (73.21%) into the moderate category, and 17 participants (10.11%) into the low category. For the loneliness variable, 19 participants (11.30%) are in

the high category, while the lowest category is represented by 15 participants (7.41%). Meanwhile, 124 participants (73.80%) fall into the moderate category. There is a positive correlation with a fairly strong ( $r$ ) value among the categories, indicating that there is a relationship between parental phubbing and feelings of loneliness.

Table 4.  
Variety of Activities Performed by Participants When Feeling Lonely

Causes of Loneliness	Frequency	%	Activity	Frequency	%
No friends	57	33.92	Playing cell phone	58	34.52
No one around	25	14.88	Doing a hobby	31	18.45
Feeling alone and neglected by parents	14	8.33	Silence	10	5.95
Having no one to communicate with	13	7.73	Sleep/Rest	13	7.74
Home alone	8	4.76	Play with friends	17	10.12
Not holding a cell phone	8	4.76	Listening to music	7	4.17
Only child	3	1.78	Praying	5	2.98
Other	8	4.76	Study	2	1.19
No answer	32	19.04	No answer	25	14.88
<b>Total</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>100</b>

The absence of friends to interact with was the most common factor causing loneliness (33.92%), followed by having no one around (14.88%), feeling alone and neglected by parents (8.33%), having no one to communicate with (7.73%), being alone at home (4.76%), not holding a phone (4.76%), and being an only child (1.78%). Using a phone for entertainment was the most frequent activity participants engaged in when feeling lonely (34.52%). Some participants pursued hobbies (18.45%), played with friends (10.12%), slept (7.74%), remained idle (5.95%), listened to music (4.17%), prayed (2.98%), or studied (1.19%). Twenty-five participants did not respond to the questionnaire, so their coping mechanisms for loneliness remain unknown.

Prior to regression analysis, it was necessary to verify whether the data met fundamental assumptions, including tests for normality and linearity. The normality test assesses whether data follow a normal distribution for parametric statistics (Widana & Muliani, 2020). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test yielded a significance value of  $\alpha = .00$ , indicating the sample data came from a non-normally distributed population. This non-normal distribution resulted from the presence of numerous outliers. Even after removing 10 outliers based on histogram analysis, the significance value remained .00. Research suggests that data normality has a limited impact on regression hypothesis testing, as  $t$ -tests and  $F$ -tests often maintain strong statistical power for effect estimation with sufficiently large sample sizes (Li et al., 2012). While the Central Limit Theorem doesn't specify exact sample size requirements for "sufficiently large," researchers propose varying thresholds, ranging from 65 to 500, for reliable regression analysis with non-normal data (Lumley et al., 2002). Consequently, the study proceeded with linearity testing and hypothesis analysis.

Table 5.  
Linearity Test Results

Component	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Linearity	7.138	1	.009
Deviation from Linearity	.837	42	.742

Note.  $p < .05$  indicates statistical significance. Test conducted using ANOVA.

Table 6.  
Hypothesis Testing Result

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Adj. <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
Constant	3.102	.165	–	18.785	< .001		
Parental Phubbing	.132	.048	.207	2.729	.007	.043	.037

Note.  $N = 168$ . *SE* = Standard Error; *B* = Unstandardized Coefficient;  $\beta$  = Standardized Coefficient.

The results of the linearity test indicate a significant linearity deviation value of .74 ( $> .05$ ), allowing for the use of linear regression analysis (Winarsunu, 2017). The regression results are tested with a 95% confidence level and a 5% significance level ( $\alpha = .05$ ). Suppose the significance value (*p*-value) is less than .05. In this case, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected. The alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted, indicating a significant influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable (Ghozali, 2016). The results of the hypothesis test in the table above indicate that the *t*-statistic is 2.729 with a significance level (*p*) of .00 (less than .05), placing the regression results in the  $H_0$  rejection area. Thus, it can be concluded that parental phubbing has a significant influence on feelings of loneliness. The *R*-squared value indicates that parental phubbing accounts for 4.3% of feelings of loneliness. The regression equation for parental phubbing and loneliness is formulated as:

$$Y = 3.10 + 0.13X$$

where *Y* represents loneliness and *X* represents parental phubbing.

The researchers acknowledge that normally distributed data enhances the reliability of results, adheres to accepted scientific standards, and ensures study replicability (Husaeni et al., 2025). However, the *t*-test and regression analysis remained valid because the normality assumptions in classical linear regression and *t*-tests apply to residual (error) distributions, rather than the raw data. Moreover, both methods are robust enough to withstand violations of the normality assumption (Sawilowsky & Hillman, 1992). This is supported by previous research. Sawilowsky and Hillman demonstrated that *t*-test power calculations remain relevant even with highly non-normal data, whereas Zimmerman (1998) and Skovlund and Fenstad (2001) found that *t*-tests can outperform non-parametric alternatives, such as the Wilcoxon test. Therefore, using *t*-tests and linear regression remains methodologically sound despite imperfect normality.

## DISCUSSION

The study revealed that parental phubbing has a significant influence on adolescent loneliness. Most participants exhibited moderate levels of both parental phubbing experiences and feelings of loneliness. Correlation analysis across different attribute categories consistently demonstrated significant positive relationships, indicating that increased frequency of parental phubbing corresponds with heightened feelings of loneliness among adolescents. These findings align with previous research that has established connections between parental phubbing and children’s loneliness (Dong et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2022). Dong et al. found that parental phubbing affected loneliness, with self-esteem

mediating this effect. In contrast, Wang et al. specifically identified mother phubbing as correlating with adolescent loneliness.

These results support the parent-adolescent proximity theory, which posits that neglectful closeness harms adolescent psychology (Moretti & Peled, 2004). Human attachment extends beyond parent-infant relationships, persisting throughout developmental stages (Allen et al., 2003). During adolescence, parental bonds remain crucial, though diminish slightly as peer relationships gain importance (Carlson et al., 2004). Insecure attachment through parental neglect may lead to complete emotional detachment, creating perceptions of parents as unreliable support sources (Guarnotta, 2023). Such neglect fosters withdrawal and feelings of worthlessness, which can lead to increased loneliness.

Loneliness represents a common adolescent experience, often stemming from deficient social connections (Weeks & Asher, 2012). Parental phubbing refers to the attention diverted to smartphones, which disrupts parent-child interactions (Wang et al., 2022). This digital neglect generates loneliness by compromising connections with primary support figures (Burns et al., 2022). When parents use phones during interactions, adolescents perceive neglect and seek external relationships (Dixon et al., 2023). Such behavior exemplifies the contemporary neglect that is normalized within family digital practices (Ali, 2022).

Positive parent-adolescent interactions play a crucial role in psychological development, fostering positive personality traits in adolescents and naturally shielding them from feelings of loneliness (Azwan, 2017). A lack of connection and poor communication with parents can lead adolescents to feel lonely, as they perceive themselves as unworthy of parental attention and time (Ladd & Pettit, 2002; Syamsiah, 2010). Adolescents who observe their parents using phones during conversations often interpret this behavior as a sign of dislike or indifference (Stockdale et al., 2018).

Emotional responses stem from an individual's interpretation of events. In this context, a child's ability to regulate emotions is key in determining the extent to which parental phubbing affects their emotional well-being. Adolescents with strong emotional regulation skills can better manage negative affective responses to parental neglect, thereby minimizing psychological consequences such as loneliness (Gross, 2015). Conversely, poor emotional regulation tends to exacerbate feelings of exclusion and heighten the risk of prolonged loneliness (Liu et al., 2020). These findings align with prior research indicating that individuals with maladaptive emotion regulation strategies tend to experience greater social isolation (Gross & John, 2003).

Female adolescents in this study reported higher levels of parental phubbing and loneliness compared to males. This supports previous research indicating that psychological consequences of parental phubbing are more pronounced among girls (Wang et al., 2022). The heightened loneliness in adolescent girls stems from their tendency to internalize problems and their greater need for emotional connection compared to boys (Wedaloka & Turnip, 2019). They require open communication with parents and balanced guidance (Santrock, 2014).

The group of participants aged 16–18 years had the highest average of parental phubbing and loneliness, followed by participants aged 12–15, and 19–21. Some adolescents experienced the same phase at the age of 12 years. There was a feeling of a lack of support and attention from their parents. This feeling reaches its peak around 16 years of age and then decreases as individuals enter late adolescence (Hadiwijaya et al., 2017). Participants in this research entered the adolescent development stage. On this stage, a child feels capable of performing adult tasks, leading to a desire for independence and freedom from parental supervision (Santrock, 2014). Adolescents still need support from parents, but gradually decreases with increasing age and their ability to do things independently (Branje et al., 2012).

Regarding the causes of adolescent loneliness, the absence of friends and people around is the most common cause for adolescents to experience loneliness (48.80%), followed by feeling alone and not being cared for by their parents (8.33%). This supports Lam et al. (2014) that the time adolescents spend with their parents has relatively decreased compared to their peers, who tend to prioritize it. Adolescents generally want to be involved in a more intimate friend group. The more accepted by their peers, the less lonely they feel (Triani, 2012). As previously explained, parents continue to play a significant role in adolescent development. With the support of their parents, adolescents can receive advice, suggestions, and the facilities needed to prepare for their future (Rahmawati, 2016).

Using smartphones for entertainment was the most common activity among participants when feeling lonely (34.52%). Phone use due to loneliness and depression is a widespread phenomenon (Özdemir et al., 2014). Loneliness exhibits a positive correlation with social media apps, such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, while showing a negative correlation with communication-based phone apps (MacDonald & Schermer, 2021). This is supported by a survey from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (*Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia* or APJII), which found that students and university-aged individuals had the highest internet penetration rate in Indonesia in 2022.

Family closeness is a fundamental need for adolescent development, particularly in shaping good character. In practice, however, some parents recognize this yet neglect it, prioritizing career or material pursuits in the name of happiness (Nur & Daulay, 2021). Work demands that require parents to use phones at home, coupled with the rise of entertainment content on social media, explain why smartphones are so firmly attached to parents' hands (Ante-Contreras, 2016). Many parents struggle to balance childcare responsibilities, social media engagement, and work tasks while at home.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study results indicate that parental phubbing has a statistically significant but relatively small effect on adolescents' loneliness. Both parental phubbing and loneliness among adolescents living with parents in Malang fall under the moderate category. This research provides new insights into parental neglect patterns and their psychological impact on teenagers. Parents need to recognize that closeness with adolescents is a means to foster various positive values that can later help them manage themselves effectively and independently. Communication and support from parents are essential needs that adolescents still require during their transition to adulthood. The emergence of loneliness due to parental phubbing can be moderated by variables such as parent attachment and emotional regulation, allowing further researchers to explore in-depth relationships with these three variables. Limitations in this study, particularly the use of data that did not follow a normal distribution and the lack of diversity among participants, could have been further explored to provide a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the topic. Exploratory research is also necessary to uncover the patterns of interaction between parents who actively use cell phones and their children, thereby comprehensively understanding the reasons behind the emergence of psychological problems, such as loneliness.

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