
NEWSLETTER

Parental Phubbing and Young Children' Problem Behavior: A Moderated Mediation Model

By Zu, J., Yang, W. Y., Zhou, T. F., Teng, W. Q., & Dan, F.

Correspondence to: Fei Dan, Shenyang Normal University, China. E-mail: danfeier_2003@163.com

CHILD problem behaviors refer to those behaviors that are detrimental to physical and mental health of young children, including externalizing problems such as aggression, violence, disobedience to discipline, etc. and internalizing ones like anxiety, depression, withdrawal and so on. Problem behaviors impede children's acquisition of knowledge and skills. The parent-child relationship is considered a key factor affecting children's growth, and the quality of parent-child interaction can predict child problem behaviors. The popularization of smart phones and other electronic devices today has led to a special human behavior dubbed "phubbing", which is not beneficial to interpersonal communication and interaction. As a result, it is necessary to undertake a deep investigation into the negative impact of parental phubbing on child development.

This study sampled 527 parents (189 fathers and 338 mothers) from 14 kindergartens in Liaoning, Shandong, and Shanxi Provinces, involving 127 three-year-olds, 157 four-year-olds, and 148 five-year-olds, and 95 six-year-olds. The Parental Phubbing Scale, Child-Parent Relationship Scale, Conners' Child Problem Behavior Scale, and family social and economic status (SES) measurement were used as research tools; the common method bias test was adopted as the research method.

The results of the study show that: the overall severity of phubbing among parents is high, while the severity of problem behavior in young children is of lower-middle level; parental phubbing can not only directly predict child problem behaviors, but also indirectly predict them through the parent-child relationship; young children's age enhanced the predictive effect of parental phubbing on child problem behaviors, but weakened that of the parent-child relationship on child problem behaviors; When the parent scores between 18.7 and 24.5 points in the Parental Phubbing Scale, the problem behavior of his or her child surpasses the alert threshold.

To ensure the healthy growth of young children, parents should be alert to the cumulative risk effect of their phubbing and its threshold, reduce their cell phone dependence, and dedicate quality time to children.

Source: Studies in Preschool Education, 2022; 2022(6):34-48