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# Fear of missing out mediated the relationship between social appearance anxiety and phubbing in Turkish adults

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**Abstract:** The existing body of research lacks investigations into the potential links between fear of missing out (FOMO), social appearance anxiety, and phubbing. For the first time, this study examined the mediating role of FOMO in the relationship between phubbing and social appearance anxiety. Participants included 341 Turkish adults ( $M_{age} = 28.25, SD = 8.02$ ) and completed the measures of FOMO, social appearance anxiety, and phubbing. Results showed that social appearance anxiety was positively related to FOMO and phubbing. Also, FOMO was positively associated with phubbing. The results of the mediation analysis indicated that FOMO partially mediated the association of social appearance anxiety with phubbing. These results suggest that social appearance anxiety exacerbates the FOMO, which in turn leads to an increased level of phubbing. These findings have significant implications for both research and practice.

**Keywords:** Fear of missing out; social appearance anxiety; phubbing; Turkish adults.

## Introduction

As technological advancements have progressed, communication methods have shifted from face-to-face interactions to online platforms. Social media has provided users with numerous opportunities to engage with others (Przybylski et al., 2013), not only facilitating communication but also serving as a source of information on the lives and cultures of others (Çakır, 2020). Additionally, social media allows users to create content and socially interact with vast audiences simultaneously (Bayer et al., 2020). Furthermore, the use of social media has been shown to have positive impacts on the psychosocial well-being of individuals (Keum et al., 2022).

However, social media also carries various negative consequences for users (Elhai et al., 2021). Studies have revealed an association between social media use and increased levels of phubbing behavior (Tanhan et al., 2023), as well as cyberbullying victimization and perpetration (Baccarella et al., 2018), anxiety, psychological adjustment problems (Arslan et al., 2022), sleep problems, and COVID-19 fear (Yıldırım et al., 2023a). Moreover, social media use has been linked to various mental health problems, family conflict, poor family relationships (Özaslan et al., 2022), and lower self-esteem (Tibber et al., 2020).

Phubbing refers to the behavior of paying excessive attention to one's phone rather than fully engaging in conversations or activities with others present (Blanca & Bendayan, 2018). Previous research has shown that individuals with problematic smartphone use tend to have anxious attachments and experiences (Hızarcı, 2018). Additionally, studies have found a positive relationship between phubbing and fear of missing out (FOMO) (Blanca & Bendayan, 2018), suggesting that these two constructs are closely linked. Moreover, phone distractions have been associated with negative outcomes such as online game addiction, cyberbullying, and loneliness (Batmaz & Celik, 2021; Batmaz et al., 2021; Batmaz et al., 2022; Batmaz et al., 2020; Doğrusever et al., 2022; Kurtuluş et al., 2023; Kaya et al., 2023a; Kaya et al., 2023b; Sarıgül, 2022; Yıldırım & Çiçek, 2022).

The active use of social media as a means of self-expression allows individuals to attach importance to their appearance and receive feedback, which may lead to social appearance anxiety (Altındış et al., 2017) and psychological health problems (Sarıgül et al., 2023; Turan et al., 2023; Yıldırım et al., 2023b; Yıldırım et al., 2023c). Thus, social appearance anxiety could potentially exacerbate FOMO and contribute to phubbing behavior. These findings suggest that the relationship between phubbing and FOMO is complex and influenced by various factors, including the use of technology, social media, and individual psychological traits.

Social appearance anxiety is a psychological construct that has been widely studied in the context of social media and technology use. According to Doğan (2010), social appearance anxiety is defined as an excessive worry or concern regarding one's physical appearance and body perception. Individuals who experience high levels of social appearance anxiety tend to have an excessive concern about various aspects of their physical

appearance, such as weight, height, facial features, and clothing and may withdraw themselves from social situations or activities that could potentially draw attention to their appearance.

Research has suggested that social appearance anxiety may be a risk factor for experiencing FOMO and phubbing, two phenomena that are increasingly prevalent in the digital age. Franchina et al. (2018) found that FOMO was associated with problematic social media use and predicted phubbing, while Beyens et al. (2016) suggested that the need to belong, be liked, and be popular was related to the increasing use of social media, which was mediated by FOMO. Altındış et al. (2017) conducted a study with university students and found that more than half of the sample preferred to share their photo with their friend whom they thought was beautiful, and one-fifth of them edited the images they shared, highlighting the importance of appearance in the social media context.

Moreover, research has indicated that individuals with low self-efficacy and anxiety exhibit more FOMO and phubbing (Erdoğan et al., 2021). Çakır (2020) found that as the fear of missing out increases, so does anxiety, while Vannucci et al. (2017) showed that anxiety symptoms increase as the time spent on social media increases. Another study found that as social media addiction increases, social appearance anxiety increases (Fidan, 2021). Finally, FOMO was found to mediate the relationship between social anxiety and Facebook use (Dempsey et al., 2019). As such, understanding the complex interplay between social appearance anxiety and digital technology use may help inform interventions and strategies to promote healthy technology use and mental health.

FOMO has become a widely recognized term that reflects the pervasive social pressure of the digital age. Przybylski and colleagues (2013) defined FOMO as the concern that others may be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent and the desire to stay always connected with others. The constant connection to social media creates a compulsive use of social networking sites (Elhai et al., 2021), leading to an excessive focus on likes, awards, and other forms of social validation (Rozgonjuk et al., 2020). Individuals may feel the need to constantly share their experiences and create an idealized version of themselves on social media, driven by a fear of being judged or disliked by others (Sezerer Albayrak, 2021). A study found that young individuals spend too much time on social media and experience FOMO while neglecting their responsibilities, such as studying (Milyavskaya et al., 2018). Excessive FOMO is also linked to various addictive behaviours, such as problematic internet use, social media addiction, and smartphone addiction, as well as phubbing behaviours (Rozgonjuk et al., 2020). Collectively, the available evidence suggests that FOMO is a significant issue that affects individuals' psychological health and is closely associated with social media use.

The present study aimed to investigate the relationships between social appearance anxiety, FOMO, and phubbing. As social media use continues to rise, individuals may experience anxiety related to their

appearance, which could be associated with excessive use of social media and lead to phubbing behaviour. FOMO is defined as a sum of individuals' negative and intense feelings that other people have a better life than themselves. These individuals constantly want to follow the content shared by others on social media. (Tanhan et al., 2022). An individual who effectively utilizes social media and remains informed of current trends can affect their body image and social interactions based on this information, potentially alleviating social appearance anxiety. However, this may require heightened phone usage, leading to a cycle of increased exposure, knowledge accumulation, and consequent anxiety. Given the limitless nature of the online realm, a continuous sense of social inadequacy can persist, further driving escalated phone usage. FOMO has been found to be a significant predictor of problematic social media use, including phubbing behaviour. Thus, we hypothesized that social appearance anxiety would positively predict FOMO and phubbing and that FOMO would mediate the relationship between social appearance anxiety and phubbing. Specifically, we expected that individuals who experience high levels of social appearance anxiety may be more likely to use social media excessively to seek validation and approval from others, which could lead to phubbing behaviour. The mediating role of FOMO in this relationship was also examined, as previous research has suggested that FOMO could play a crucial role in explaining the relationship between social anxiety and social media use. By investigating these relationships, the present study aimed to contribute to the literature on social anxiety and social media use and provide insights for practitioners and individuals who may be struggling with these issues.

### **Method**

In this study, we utilized the convenience sampling method, with the inclusion criteria being participants who were over 18 years of age, internet users, and willing to take part in the research. The sample size was determined based on Kline's (2014) recommendation of 10-20 times the number of scale items. All participants provided verbal consent after being informed about the study. However, 25 individuals who declined to participate, were absent on survey days or did not respond to at least 90% of the questionnaire items were excluded from the final study group.

### **Participants**

The study employed a snowball sampling technique to gather data from 341 Turkish adults with a mean age of 28.25 years ( $SD = 8.02$ ). The sample comprised 218 (63.9%) females and 123 (36.1%) males, with 161 (47.2%) of the participants reporting being married and 180 (52.8%) being single. Gender was dichotomized into female and male, and only these two options were used in the analyses. Regarding education, 10% ( $n=34$ ) of the participants had completed primary school, while 50.7% ( $n=173$ ) were high school graduates (completed their education at the age of 18). Additionally,

36.1% (n=123) had attained a bachelor's degree, and 3.2% (n=11) had completed a postgraduate degree (either a master's or doctorate).

### **Measures**

#### **Fear of Missing out Scale (FOMO; Przybylski et al., 2013)**

The FOMO scale used in the current study is a unidimensional measure that comprises 10 items. Participants rated each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 5 (extremely true). The total score on the FOMO scale ranged between 10-50, with higher scores indicating greater levels of FOMO. The FOMO scale has been found to have good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.81 and test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.8, as reported in previous research conducted in Turkey (Gökler et al., 2016). The factor analysis revealed that the 10-item one-dimensional scale accounted for 39.4% of the total variance in scores. The factor loadings of the one-dimensional structure ranged from 0.36 to 0.77, as determined by the factor analysis. In the current study, the internal consistency of the FOMO was found to be .82.

#### ***Generic Scale of Phubbing (GSP: Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018)***

The GSP is a scale consisting of 15 items that are divided into four subscales, including nomophobia, interpersonal conflict, self-isolation, and problem acknowledgement. Respondents rated each item on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (always), and higher scores indicate a greater level of phubbing. In the present study, an overall score was computed for the analysis. The Turkish adaptation of the GSP was carried out by Ergün et al. (2020), where satisfactory Cronbach alpha coefficients were found for the subscales, including nomophobia (.82), interpersonal conflict (.87), self-isolation (.81), and problem acknowledgement (.70). The overall reliability of the scale was also found to be satisfactory (Cronbach's alpha = .89) (Ergün et al., 2020). A higher score on the scale implies a higher level of negative behaviours. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha was found to be .88, indicating good reliability of the scale (George & Mallery, 2021). In the current study, the internal consistency of the GSP was found to be .90.

#### ***Social Appearance Anxiety Scale (SAAS: Hart et al., 2008)***

The SAAS consists of 16 items, and participants are asked to rate their level of agreement with each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale. A higher score on the SAAS indicates greater anxiety related to social appearance. The Turkish adaptation of the SAAS was performed by Doğan (2010) and has been shown to have good psychometric properties in Turkish populations. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the SAAS was found to be .94, indicating high internal consistency reliability. The scale's test-retest reliability coefficient in the Turkish adaptation study was found to be 0.85. Construct validity was determined using factor analysis.

A single-factor structure with an eigenvalue of 8.49 and explaining 53.4% of the total variance was obtained from explanatory factor analysis, and the factor loadings of the scale ranged from .35 to .87. Confirmatory factor analysis showed that the Chi-square value ( $\chi^2 = 143.79$ ,  $N = 254$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ) was significant when examining the fit indices. In the current study, the internal consistency of the SAAS was found to be .95.

### **Procedure**

In the present study, an online survey was used as the data collection method. The survey was designed using Google Forms software and distributed through email and social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook. To increase the sample size, a snowballing technique was utilized, encouraging participants to invite their acquaintances to take part in the study. The participants were informed about the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses before giving their online informed consent. Institutional ethical approval was obtained before the commencement of the study. The study received approval from the Sakarya University Educational Research and Publication Ethics Committee with ethics reference number 14. This approach ensured that the study was conducted ethically and adhered to the guidelines set out by the institutional review board.

### **Statistical Analyses**

In this study, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationships between social appearance anxiety, FOMO, and phubbing. Before conducting the regression analysis, the assumptions of linearity, multicollinearity, and normality were tested. The Mahalanobis distance, skewness, and kurtosis scores were calculated and reported in Table 2 to ensure that the data met the required assumptions for regression analysis. The results indicated that the assumptions were met. The mediating role of FOMO in the relationship between social appearance anxiety and phubbing was tested using the SPSS PROCESS macro v.3.4 Model 4, which is a regression-based mediation analysis developed by Hayes (2013). This method was used to determine how the causal agent X (social appearance anxiety) transmits its effect on Y (phubbing) through the mediator variable FOMO. Bootstrapping was used to determine the statistical significance of the mediating effect. Unlike traditional approaches, bootstrapping provides an estimate of the standard error and confidence intervals, making it a more accurate estimate of the sampling distribution of a statistic (Simon & Bruce, 1991). Reliability analysis of the scales was conducted by computing Cronbach's alpha coefficient to determine the internal consistency of the scales used in the study.

Table 2

*The Results of Regression Assumptions*

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables	Skewness	Kurtosis	VIFs	CI
Phubbing	—	.89	1.28		1.000
	Social appearance anxiety	1.07	.60	1.43	6.415
	FOMO	.30	-.06	1.43	9.584

VIFs: Variance inflation factor; FOMO refers to fear of missing out; CI: Condition Index

**Results**

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the variables based on gender and educational status. Prior to conducting the main analysis, a preliminary analysis was conducted to investigate potential gender differences in the scores of the study variables. The results revealed no significant differences in the scores between males and females ( $p > 0.05$ ), and as such, gender was not considered in the main analysis. Similarly, no significant differences were observed between undergraduate and graduate students for any of the variables ( $p > 0.05$ )."

Table 1

*Descriptive statistics of the variables grouped by gender and educational status*

Variable	Gender /Education	N	%	Mean	SD
Phubbing	Male	123	36.1	44.95	14.95
	Female	218	63.9	44.77	16.41
	High school	173	50.7	43.57	15.44
	Undergraduate	123	36.1	46.40	16.43
	Primary school	34	10.0	43.47	15.26
	Postgraduate	11	3.2	51.36	17.30
FOMO	Male	123	36.1	26.94	7.10
	Female	218	63.9	27.19	7.59
	High school	173	50.7	27.70	7.24
	Undergraduate	123	36.1	26.76	7.72
	Primary school	34	10.0	26.08	7.23
	Postgraduate	11	3.2	24.63	6.75

## Social Appearance

Anxiety	Male	123	36.1	36.43	13.55
	Female	218	63.9	35.40	14.29
	High school	173	50.7	36.26	14.53
	Undergraduate	123	36.1	34.41	14.15
	Primary school	34	10.0	36.32	11.43
	Postgraduate	11	3.2	41.63	10.46

### Relationships between study variables

Descriptive statistics including the mean and standard deviation, as well as the intercorrelations among the study variables, were reported in Table 3. The results showed that phubbing was significantly and positively related to both FOMO ( $r = .51, p < 0.01$ ) and social appearance anxiety ( $r = .45, p < 0.01$ ). Additionally, there was a significant and positive relationship between FOMO and social appearance anxiety ( $r = .55, p < 0.01$ ).

Table 3

#### *The Results of Descriptive Statistics*

Variables	1.	2.	3.
1. Phubbing	1	.51**	.45**
2. FOMO		1	.55**
3. Social appearance anxiety			1
M	44.83	27.10	35.77
SD	15.88	7.41	14.02

\*\* $p < 0.01$ ; FOMO refers to the fear of missing out

### The mediating role of FOMO

In the present study, regression analysis was employed to investigate the relationship between social appearance anxiety, FOMO, and phubbing. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 4, where it was revealed that both social appearance anxiety and FOMO significantly predicted phubbing (Coeff. = .51, 95% CI: .40 – .61;  $p < .001$  and Coeff. = .45, 95% CI: .31 – .48;  $p < .001$ , respectively). Additionally, the results of the regression-based mediation analysis revealed that social appearance anxiety significantly and positively predicted FOMO (Coeff. = .29, 95% CI:



.24 – .33;  $p < .001$ ) and phubbing (Coeff. = .51, 95% CI: .40 – .62;  $p < .001$ ). FOMO, in turn, significantly and positively predicted phubbing (Coeff. = .79, 95% CI: .56 – 1.02;  $p < .001$ ).

Table 4  
Mediator Model Coefficients

Predictor		Consequent						
		FOMO			Phubbing			
		Coeff.	SE	<i>p</i>		Coeff.	SE	<i>p</i>
Social appearance anxiety	<i>a</i>	.29	.02	<.001	<i>c'</i>	.28	.06	<.001
FOMO		-----	-----	-----	<i>b</i>	.79	.11	<.001
Constant	<i>i</i> <sub>1</sub>	16.73	.92	<.001	<i>i</i> <sub>2</sub>	13.16	2.77	<.001
$R^2 = .30$				$R^2 = .30$				
$F(1, 339) = 145.95, p = .000$				$F(2, 338) = 72.89, p = .000$				

Note: FOMO refers to fear of missing out; Coeff. = Coefficient

The findings of the mediation analysis demonstrated that the relationship between social appearance anxiety and phubbing was partially mediated by FOMO. The direct effect of social appearance anxiety on phubbing was .28 ( $p < .001$ ), and the indirect effect of FOMO on phubbing was .23 ( $p < .001$ ). The total effect of social appearance anxiety on phubbing was .51 ( $p < .001$ ). These results suggest that individuals who experience social appearance anxiety may engage in phubbing behavior to cope with their anxiety. Additionally, the results suggest that individuals who experience FOMO may be more likely to engage in phubbing behavior. Finally, the results of the bootstrapping analysis indicated that all direct and indirect path coefficients were statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). The present study provides valuable insight into the factors that contribute to phubbing behavior and highlights the importance of addressing social appearance anxiety and FOMO in interventions aimed at reducing phubbing behavior.

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*Bootstrapping process of partial model*

	Coeff	BootMean	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Constant	16.73	16.73	.98	14.80	18.63
Social appearance anxiety → FOMO	.28	.29	.02	.23	.34
Constant	13.16	13.17	2.72	7.79	18.44
Social appearance anxiety → Phubbing	.28	.28	.07	.14	.42
FOMO → Phubbing	.79	.79	.12	.55	1.03

*Note:* FOMO refers to fear of missing out

### Discussion

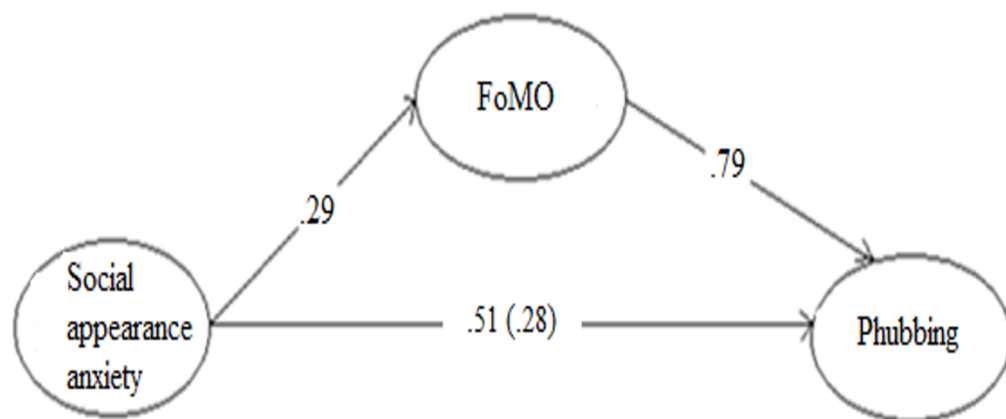
The current study found positive and significant relationships between social appearance anxiety, FOMO, and phubbing. The result indicated that FOMO positively significantly predicted social appearance anxiety and phubbing behaviors. Social appearance anxiety also positively and significantly predicts phubbing. Foremost importantly, the results showed that the FOMO partially mediated the relationship between social appearance anxiety and phubbing.

To the best of our knowledge, no research findings were found in which the concepts of social appearance anxiety, FOMO, and phubbing were collectively examined. However, some studies examine the concepts among themselves and with other related concepts. For example, there are significant relationships between social media addiction and social appearance anxiety (Fidan, 2021), problematic internet use, and smartphone addiction (Şensoy & Ayar, 2021), which may be related to phubbing, and social appearance anxiety. Similarly, anxiety sensitivity (Ergün et al., 2020) and shyness in interpersonal relationships (Parmaksız, 2019) positively predict phubbing. These findings are consistent with current research results.

There are also studies examining the relationships between FOMO and phubbing. Many studies have concluded that there is a significant relationship between FOMO and phubbing and that FOMO positively predicts phubbing (Franchina et al., 2018; May Phing et al., 2019; Schneider & Hitzfeld, 2021). These findings are consistent with current research results. Earlier research demonstrated that individuals with anxiety exhibited more FOMO and phubbing (Blackwell et al., 2017; Dhir et al., 2018; Erdoğan et al., 2021; Oberst et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2022). Considering these findings, it can be reasonably assumed that anxiety and

its various types play important roles in influencing both FOMO and phubbing behaviours.

In the extant literature, no research findings were found that discussed the mediating role of FOMO in the relationship between social appearance anxiety and phubbing. However, the mediation effect of FOMO (Figure 1) has been tested in many studies with similar concepts. A study conducted with university students indicated that FOMO had a mediating role in the relationship between social appearance anxiety and cyberloafing (Ergin & Karataş, 2022). Another study conducted with university students determined that FOMO mediated the relationship between basic psychological needs and phubbing (Butt & Arshad, 2021). FOMO also mediates the relationship between the need to belong to a group, to be liked and famous, the increased use of Facebook (Beyens et al., 2016), and the relationship between social anxiety and Facebook use (Dempsey et al., 2019). These findings are consistent with the models and results of the current research. It is also important to note that the related concepts are tested with mediation models differently. For example, it has been determined that problematic social media use plays a mediating role in the relationship between FOMO and phubbing (Franchina et al., 2018); in another study, it was detected that phubbing mediated the relationship between self-presentation and excessive Instagram use (van der Schyff et al., 2022).



**Figure 1.** The mediational role of FOMO

Individuals with social appearance anxiety prefer to be in online environments rather than real environments that may trigger their anxiety. In this case, internet and social media use is increasing. The fact that individuals spend more time on social media gives them the ability to follow developments and stay on the agenda. Thus, individuals have an income that can compensate for their negative body image by always visiting online. It is also stated that not following the experiences and developments of others

will lead to a kind of exclusion (Schneider & Hitzfeld, 2021). Therefore, individuals tend to use their smartphones more to be accepted and not have anxiety, creating a suitable ground for phubbing. As a result, it can be said that FOMO has an essential contribution to the increase of phubbing in individuals with social appearance anxiety. The statistical decrease in the relationship between social appearance anxiety and phubbing due to controlling FOMO in the model confirms this idea.

In this study, we found that FOMO partially mediated the association of social appearance anxiety with phubbing. This suggests that adults with high social appearance anxiety experience more FOMO, which in turn leads to greater levels of phubbing. Individuals who experience social appearance anxiety may avoid physical interaction with others due to the fear of negative evaluation based on their external appearance. Therefore, they may rely more on social media to seek acceptance and validation from others, as social media provides a platform where their appearance is not directly evaluated. However, this can lead to anxiety and FOMO if they cannot keep up with the constant updates and interactions on social media. This, in turn, may increase their tendency to phub (i.e., snubbing others in favor of using their phone) as a coping mechanism. Therefore, in this study, we found that FOMO partially mediated the relationship between social appearance anxiety and phubbing. In line with the study's findings, information studies on cyber awareness can be carried out in various institutions such as universities and municipalities. In public institutions and organizations, psychoeducation programs with social appearance anxiety, FOMO, and phubbing can be organized so that individuals can become aware of these concepts. Policymakers can develop policies and make legal arrangements to create cyber awareness in society in line with current study findings. In addition, recent study findings can guide future policies and regulations. Finally, mental health professionals such as psychiatrists, psychologists, and psychological counsellors can use the results of this study to develop individual and group counselling programs that address the negative consequences of social appearance anxiety, FOMO, and phubbing. By incorporating the findings of this study into their work, mental health professionals can help individuals overcome their smartphone addiction and improve their mental health and well-being.

#### **Limitations and future directions**

The study has some limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the data were collected using self-report measurement tools, which are limited in terms of accuracy and may have a potential for biases. Additionally, it should be noted that the majority of the participants had a master's degree or above, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, using a cross-sectional research design makes it difficult to establish causal links between the constructs examined in the current study. In addition, the lack of attention to cultural differences, equal distribution of gender, and the number of samples can be stated as other limitations. Future studies can be compared with these research findings by

considering larger samples, including participants from different ethnicities and cultures, and new variables that may be related to the concepts examined in this study. Studies can be tested using mixed, qualitative, experimental, and longitudinal methods to better explore the development of phubbing in individuals and the influential factors in this process. These differences can be explored in future studies. Again, repeating the study among different age groups and comparing the results between age groups may increase the generalizability and validity of the results. Furthermore, it is important to note that in the extant literature, anxiety exhibits a significant positive relationship with FOMO and phubbing, with correlation coefficients frequently exceeding 0.50 to 0.60. This result suggests an additional limitation of our study, as the presence of such strong correlations introduces the possibility of causal effects extending across the independent, mediator, and dependent variables. This relationship warrants careful consideration and recognition as a potential limitation in our analysis. Finally, the current study used a snowball sampling technique, which may carry biases in terms of the generalizability of findings. Future research should use random sampling to address this issue.

In conclusion, the findings of this study provide important insights into the relationship between social appearance anxiety, FOMO, and phubbing. The study revealed that individuals with high levels of social appearance anxiety may be more likely to experience FOMO, which in turn can lead to increased levels of phubbing. This suggests that interventions targeting FOMO may be effective in reducing phubbing behaviour among individuals with social appearance anxiety.

### **Statement of Competing Interests**

The authors do not declare any interest.

### **Ethics Approval**

The University of Sakarya Ethics Review Committee for Education Research approved (22.03.2022, Number: E-61923333-050.99-124013).

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### **Relative Contributions**

All authors conceived of the study. HB conducted the analyses and wrote the first draft of the paper. EC, LK, BF, SM, and RT revised the first draft. MY critically reviewed, commented, and revised the draft paper. All authors approved of the final version.

### **Declarations**

This article is not currently under consideration for publication elsewhere and was submitted exclusively for JGI.

### **Research Promotion**

Social appearance anxiety was positively related to FOMO and phubbing.

Research findings suggest that adults' high level of fear of missing out on events leads to the behavior of paying excessive attention to one's phone instead of fully participating in conversations or activities with other people and there is a positive relationship between them.

Mediation analysis shows that social appearance anxiety exacerbates FOMO, which in turn leads to increased levels of phubbing.

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