



# The dark side of phubbing in the workplace: Investigating the role of intrinsic motivation and the use of enterprise social media (ESM) in a cross-cultural setting

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## ABSTRACT

Despite the increasing phenomena of supervisor phubbing (a counterproductive workplace behaviour of managers), very few studies have explored its outcomes in organisations. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the relationships between supervisor phubbing and key employee outcomes. We conducted two studies in cross-cultural settings. In Study 1, which was conducted in Pakistan (a collectivistic culture), we collected 370 useable responses through an online survey from the employees working in the service sector organisations. Study 2, which was conducted in the United States of America (an individualistic culture), utilised the Prolific data collection service to gather 352 responses. Our results from both studies reveal that supervisor phubbing is negatively related to employee job performance and work engagement via intrinsic motivation. Further, enterprise social media (ESM) usage in organisations moderates the relationships between supervisor phubbing and its outcomes such that these relationships are weaker for employees whose ESM usage is higher. Our work offers significant contributions to the literature on technology use at workplace as it discusses a counterproductive workplace behaviour of managers (phubbing) and that behaviour's association with key employee outcomes in organisations while also considering the moderating role of ESM usage in organisations.

## 1. Introduction

Research reveals that although technology has produced several positive outcomes, it is also associated with severe negative consequences. For instance, studies have shown that technology provides individuals with more available work time and greater workplace flexibility (Cousins & Robey, 2015). At the same time, however, technology also introduces constant interruptions into individuals' time off that can increase stress and strain (Galluch, Grover, & Thatcher, 2015) and produce negative outcomes, such as low performance (Chen & Karahanna, 2018), increased turnover intentions (Ferguson et al., 2016), and a disturbing work-life balance (Adela & Casterella, 2019). In this era

of increasing Smartphone use in the workplace, supervisor phubbing (a phone snubbing behaviour) is a common counterproductive workplace behaviour of managers. Supervisor phubbing can be described as the extent to which a supervisor uses or is distracted by his/her cell phone while in the presence of his/her subordinate (Roberts & David, 2017). Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas (2018) view phubbing as an act of snubbing other persons in social interaction by pretending to be busy on one's phone rather than listening attentively to them. Recent research has shown that with the increasing use of Smartphone, the problem of supervisor phubbing is likewise increasing at workplaces (e.g., Roberts & David, 2020). This counterproductive workplace behaviour of managers (for instance, supervisor phubbing) is important to investigate

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because it may cause several negative employee outcomes (Fodchuk, 2007; Ju, Xu, Qin, & Spector, 2019).

A review of past research in this context reveals several gaps, which are crucial to fill. For instance, the phenomenon of phubbing is less than a decade old; scholars only began studying phubbing as an important social phenomenon after the introduction of Smartphone in human lives (Thabassum, 2021). Thus, limited research is available on this topic, and the majority of available research has focused on the topic of partner or social phubbing (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018; Cizmeci, 2017; Roberts & David, 2016; Thabassum, 2021). Research on the topic of supervisor phubbing or phubbing at workplace is currently scarce (Roberts & David, 2017, 2020; Yasin, Bashir, Abeele, & Bartels, in press). On the other hand, the findings of these already conducted studies have provided strong evidence that supervisor phubbing is an important counterproductive workplace behaviour of managers that should be investigated more extensively. Our study, therefore, attempts a comprehensive and cross-cultural investigation of supervisor phubbing and its relationships with negative employee outcomes, for instance, employee work engagement and job performance through intrinsic motivation. The literature describes work engagement as an employee's vigour, dedication, and absorption (Soares & Mosquera, 2019). Workers who are more engaged at work are considered to be more connected to their work tasks (Braganza, Chen, Canhoto, & Sap, 2020). Research has shown a positive relationship between managers' behaviour and employee work engagement (Ko, Ma, Bartnik, Haney, & Kang, 2018). This line of research indicates that when a leader carries a positive behaviour with followers, shows respect and care, listens to followers and shows his/her concern for them, the employees on the leader's team are more engaged at work (Bonner, Greenbaum, & Mayer, 2016). Because supervisor phubbing may lead employees to believe that their manager does not respect them, is not concerned about them and is not caring for them, the employees, in turn, may be less engaged in their work. Employee job performance, on the other hand, is described as the measurable efficiency of employee job behaviour that is under his/her control and which he/she contributes towards achieving organisational goals (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993). Past research reveals that the role of managers is important in shaping employees' job performance (Buil, Martínez, & Matute, 2019; Tao et al., 2017). We assume that supervisor phubbing may not only negatively affect employee work engagement but may also undermine employee job performance. For instance, Roberts and David (2020) argue that supervisor phubbing may undermine followers' job performance by negatively influencing followers' trust in their leaders.

Second, we argue that supervisor phubbing functions as a workplace stressor for subordinates. Although conservation of resources theory (COR) best describes this phenomenon, past research has neglected to explain supervisor phubbing through the lens of COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989). Bridging this gap, our research utilises COR theory to explain the relationships between supervisor phubbing and its negative employee outcomes. In doing so, we take employee intrinsic motivation as an underlying psychological mechanism in the relationships between supervisor phubbing and its outcomes. COR theory explains that people work to maintain their existing resources while attempting to gain further resources, and when they feel a loss or the threat of a loss of resources, they experience stress (Yousaf, Rasheed, Hameed, & Luqman, 2019; Zhang, Rasheed, & Luqman, 2019). The stress caused by the loss (or potential loss) of resources contributes to negative employee outcomes (Yousaf et al., 2019). We, therefore, explain supervisor phubbing as a stressor that leads to low intrinsic motivation, which is further associated with low job performance and less work engagement.

Third, although supervisor phubbing is a counterproductive workplace behaviour that managers exhibit while using Smartphone, past research has neglected to consider the relevant and important role of enterprise social media (ESM) usage in this context. Bridging this gap, our theoretical model considers the important boundary condition role of ESM usage in organisations in the context of supervisor phubbing and

its negative employee outcomes. ESM is a technological tool or an online platform built to facilitate official and social communication and interaction among workers within an organisation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Luqman, Talwar, Masood, & Dhir, 2021). By enabling employees' communication through multimodal collaborations that include images, videos and online deliberations, ESM platforms allow work-related complications to be elucidated (Razmerita et al., 2016). We assume that ESM usage in organisations can weaken the relationships between supervisor phubbing and its negative consequences for employees. As such, ESM usage may become a source of social and emotional support for employees who experience supervisor phubbing in organisations, and therefore, it may neutralise the relationships between supervisor phubbing and its negative consequences.

Fourth, most of the past research on supervisor phubbing has been conducted in the context of a single country (culture; (Roberts & David, 2017, 2020; Yasin et al., in press). However, as Johns (2006) and Ferraris, Del Giudice, Grandhi, and Cillo (2019) contend, the context of culture is significant in explaining the variables related to organisational behaviour, and the investigation of the same variable in different cultures may generate interesting findings. We, therefore, empirically test our theoretical model in both Pakistan (a collectivistic culture) and the USA (an individualistic culture). Drawing on the above discussion, which emphasises the negative role of supervisor phubbing in the workplace and explains the underlying phenomena and an important boundary condition to better understand its consequences, the aim of the present study can be specifically explained through the following three research questions (RQs): **RQ1.** How does COR theory explain the negative impact of supervisor phubbing on important employee outcomes in the workplace? **RQ2.** How does ESM usage in organisations neutralise the negative impact of supervisor phubbing? **RQ3.** Do the findings related to the consequences of supervisor phubbing differ in individualistic and collectivistic cultures? To address these RQs, we develop and test a comprehensive theoretical model across two cultures: Pakistan (a collectivistic culture) and the USA (an individualistic culture). The population of our study includes the employees working in organisations who have applied ESM technology in the workplace in Pakistan (Study 1) and in the USA (Study 2).

Our study offers substantial theoretical contributions, which can be summarised as follows. First, our research is among the pioneering attempts to comprehensively study the emerging phenomena of supervisor phubbing and its key employee outcomes in organisations. While the major focus of past research has been on the topic of social and partner phubbing (Benvenuti, Blachnio, Przepiorka, Daskalova, & Mazzoni, 2020; Roberts & David, 2016), some recent findings have directed research attention towards investigating the phenomenon of supervisor phubbing (Roberts & David, 2020; Yasin et al., in press). Our work, therefore, bridges this important research gap by comprehensively investigating supervisor phubbing and its key employee outcomes in organisations.

Second, utilising COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), our study opens a new avenue of research on phubbing by theorising supervisor phubbing—a counterproductive workplace behaviour of managers—as a source of stress for employees and explaining why and how supervisor phubbing is related to negative employee outcomes. COR theory enables us to posit intrinsic motivation as an underlying psychological mechanism in the relationships between supervisor phubbing and employee outcomes. Therefore, our study not only links supervisor phubbing and its negative outcomes but also explains the underlying reason and mechanism (intrinsic motivation) by which this link exists. Third, explaining the role of ESM as a moderator in the relationships between supervisor phubbing and its negative employee outcomes, our study provides a solution for organisations seeking to neutralise the impact of supervisor phubbing; indeed, organisations can neutralise these negative outcomes by promoting ESM usage among their employees. Finally, this study is a pioneer effort to investigate supervisor phubbing and its negative employee outcomes from a cross-cultural perspective. Therefore, we

extend the literature on supervisor phubbing and its influence on employee outcomes by providing evidence from both a collectivistic culture and an individualistic culture. This is another important contribution because to our best knowledge, no existing study has investigated supervisor phubbing and its employee outcomes in a cross-cultural setting.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. The second section discusses the background literature and theory as well as the research model. The next section develops the hypotheses. The fourth section explains the method, population and measures for both studies in detail. The fifth section reports the analyses and results while the sixth section discusses the findings. The last section highlights the theoretical and practical implications while identifying limitations and directions for future research.

## 2. Theory and background

### 2.1. Conservation of resources (COR) theory

Supervisor phubbing is a counterproductive workplace behaviour of managers that can become a source of stress for employees. COR theory, which was first presented by [Hobfoll \(1989\)](#), is well suited to describe employee behaviour in the context of supervisor phubbing. According to COR theory, people possess various kinds of resources that they use to hold, resist or overcome stress. Generally, these resources are divided into three main categories: (i) instrumental resources, for example, money and shelter, etc., (ii) social resources, for example, status or social support derived from ESM usage and (iii) psychological resources, for example, self-esteem, intrinsic motivation, etc. Stressful, shocking or upsetting events consume these resources and enhance individuals' sensitivity to ensuing stressors. Hence, when individuals experience a shortage of resources (such as low psychological resources because of supervisor phubbing), their reactions are worse than they would have been if resources were adequate. On the other hand, some resources (e.g. support that comes from ESM usage) may help individuals to repair damaged resources (such as intrinsic motivation).

COR theory ([Hobfoll, 1989](#)) implies that when individuals experience stress, they lose psychological resources, and these losses may result in additional negative outcomes. COR theory can effectively explain our model (see [Fig. 1](#)), which links supervisor phubbing with negative employee outcomes (work engagement and job performance) through intrinsic motivation (a depleted psychological resource). Applying COR theory, we take supervisor phubbing as a stressor that results in the loss of psychological resources (i.e. intrinsic motivation), which further leads to negative employee outcomes in the form of low employee work engagement and poor employee job performance. On the other hand, COR theory explains that when people experience a loss of resources, they attempt to regain resources from other domains, or they become involved in behaviour that helps them to repair a further loss of resources.

In our model, we theorise our independent variable supervisor phubbing as a stressor for subordinates, which leads them to exhibit low intrinsic motivation (the mediator); low intrinsic motivation, in turn, is associated with poorer employee job performance and lower work engagement (our ultimate dependent variables). Past research has suggested different predictors of phubbing, including but not limited to internet or Smartphone addictions, fear of missing out and low self-control ([Benvenuti et al., 2020](#)). Similarly, phubbing has been linked to outcomes, such as low trust ([Roberts & David, 2017](#)), damaged social interaction ([Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018](#)), reduced social wellbeing, depression and burnout ([Davey et al., 2018](#)). In addition to these outcomes, we believe that supervisor phubbing may be negatively associated with employee job engagement and job performance through intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is described as “the extent to which an individual is inner-directed, is interested in or fascinated with a task and engages in it for the sake of the task itself” ([Utman, 1997, p. 111](#)). Research has shown that subordinates' intrinsic motivation is influenced by managers' positive behaviour ([Al Harbi, Alarifi, & Mosbah, 2019](#); [Jensen & Bro, 2018](#)). Similarly, research has shown that supervisors' counterproductive behaviour, such as phubbing, decreases followers' interest in their work ([Liu, Liao, & Loi, 2012](#)), which may reduce followers' intrinsic motivation. Research has also revealed that

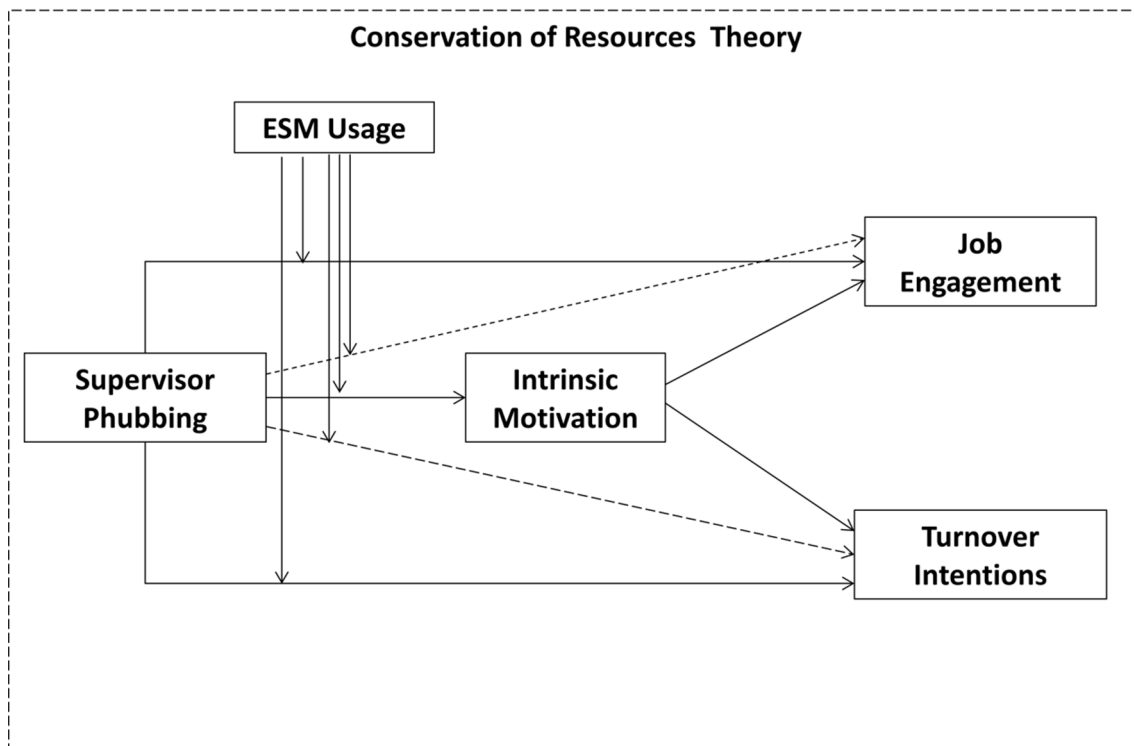


Fig. 1. Theoretical model Note: Dotted arrows show the indirect effects.

individuals' intrinsic motivation may be negatively influenced by a negative social environment (Tabernero & Hernández, 2011). These research highlights about intrinsic motivation lead us to assume that supervisor phubbing may be negatively related to employee intrinsic motivation. The relationships between supervisor phubbing, job performance, and work engagement mediated by intrinsic motivation are further moderated by ESM usage. Fig. 1 presents the moderated mediation model of our study.

### 3. Hypotheses development

#### 3.1. Supervisor phubbing, job engagement and job performance

Scholars believe that phubbing negatively affects emotional connections between people (e.g., Nakamura, Acar, & Ng, 2016). Roberts and David (2016) argue that phone snubbing (i.e. phubbing) reduces eye contact, which weakens the sense of emotional association between the involved parties. We argue that supervisor phubbing is a counterproductive workplace behaviour of managers, which not only affects the emotional connection between the supervisor and his/her subordinates but may also cause several other negative consequences for employees by sending a message to the subordinate that he/she is not a priority for his/her supervisor; thus, phubbing becomes a source of stress for employees.

The extant research argues that a person who is mistreated by his/her manager's counterproductive behaviour is likely to be less motivated and engaged in his/her job (Wang, Hsieh, & Wang, 2020). Supervisor phubbing is a counterproductive behaviour of managers wherein supervisors mistreat their subordinates by appearing to be busy with their phones (Roberts & David, 2020). This counterproductive manager behaviour may cause employees to lose psychological resources required to be properly engaged in and perform well at their jobs. Research findings have also shown that employees who are mistreated by their supervisors' counterproductive behaviour are poorly engaged at their jobs (Idike, Egwu, Ugwu, Okorie, & Akwara, 2020) and do not perform well (Jian, Kwan, Qiu, Liu, & Yim, 2012).

Schaufeli (2004) view work engagement as a state of mind that is characterised by (a) vigour, which refers to mental resilience and enthusiasm, (b) dedication or adherence to something, and (c) absorption, which means a deep interest in work. Researchers argue that leaders' ethical conduct expresses care, concern, and respect towards their followers while also showing that leaders listen to their followers (Byun, Karau, Dai, & Lee, 2018; DeConinck, 2015; Feng, Wang, Lawton, & Luo, 2019); in return, followers exhibit greater engagement at work. On the other hand, scholars view managers' counterproductive behaviour in the form of destructive leadership styles as harmful to their subordinates' work engagement (Barnes, Lucianetti, Bhawe, & Christian, 2015). These research insights lead us to theorise that supervisor phubbing may be negatively associated with followers' work engagement because supervisor phubbing demonstrates that the supervisor does not respect, care for and or listen to his/her followers. Therefore, this negative supervisory behaviour may be associated with low employee work engagement.

A recent study demonstrates that supervisor phubbing may undermine followers' job performance by damaging followers' trust in their supervisors (Roberts & David, 2020). We draw on the same line of research to assume that supervisor phubbing may decrease employee job performance. Our model posits supervisor phubbing as a stressor that reduces the store of resources employees require to perform well (Hobfoll, 1989; Yousaf et al., 2019). Our assumptions are consistent with previous research in the fields of leadership and employee outcomes. For instance, studies have identified the antecedents of employee job performance, including leadership styles (Buil et al., 2019; Walumbwa et al., 2011; Wu, Liu, & Liu, 2009). Therefore, we assume the following;

**Hypothesis 1.** *Supervisor phubbing is negatively associated with employee*

*job engagement.*

**Hypothesis 2.** *Supervisor phubbing is negatively associated with employee job performance.*

#### 3.2. Mediating role of intrinsic motivation

The consequences of supervisor phubbing may include reduced intrinsic motivation among subordinates. Thus, supervisor phubbing may cause employees to lose interest in and/or become distracted from their tasks. Supervisor phubbing signals to an employee that he/she is not essential or valued at the job or in the organisation; thus, the follower is likely to feel mistreated, which can decrease the employee's intrinsic motivation for the job (Meng, Tan, & Li, 2017). Once phubbed by a supervisor, an employee is unlikely to easily regain his/her interest in the job and, therefore, is likely to lose intrinsic motivation. On the other hand, research on the ethical conduct of supervisors has revealed that managers' positive behaviour in the form of supportive supervision is associated with employees' enhanced intrinsic motivation (Zhang et al., 2019). Phubbed employees reported that being snubbed by managers using mobile phones reduces their trust in the phubber (Cameron & Webster, 2011). Research has also linked being phubbed with reduced feelings of connectedness (Krasnova, Abramova, Notter, & Baumann, 2016) and belongingness (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018), which can lead to low intrinsic motivation at the workplace.

Low intrinsic motivation is likely to result in decreased performance and low employee engagement at work. Research indicates that intrinsically motivated individuals perform a job for the job itself and seek pleasure and enjoyment from it (Babakus, Yavas, & Karatepe, 2008). Intrinsic motivation enables employees to be more involved (Tabernero & Hernández, 2011) and to perform better (Shin & Grant, 2019). We, therefore, posit that supervisor phubbing is negatively associated with employee intrinsic motivation, which is further positively associated with employee job performance and work engagement. Our assumptions are consistent with Hobfoll (1989) COR theory, which explains that various environmental stressors can reduce workers' psychological resources and thus lead to negative employee outcomes. In our case, supervisor phubbing serves as a stressor that may reduce employees' psychological resources (i.e. intrinsic motivation), which, in turn, is associated with low work engagement and decreased performance. Therefore, we hypothesise as follows;

**Hypothesis 3.** *A negative relationship exists between supervisor phubbing and subordinates' intrinsic motivation.*

**Hypothesis 4a.** *Intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship between supervisor phubbing and employee job engagement.*

**Hypothesis 4b.** *Intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship between supervisor phubbing and employee job performance.*

#### 3.3. Moderating role of ESM

ESM allows employees to share, post, edit, exchange, and broadcast user-generated content through an online platform within an organisation (Pitafi, Kanwal, Akhtar, & Irfan, 2018). More specifically, ESM is an intranet platform within an organisation that facilitates timely, accurate, and extensive interactions among employees (Leonardi, Huysman, & Steinfield, 2013). Organisations' use of social media applications to increase knowledge sharing, collaboration and innovation was documented well before the introduction of ESM (Nusrat, He, Luqman, Waheed, & Dhir, 2021; Pitafi, Rasheed, Kanwal, & Ren, 2020; Talwar, Dhir, Kaur, Zafar, & Alrasheedy, 2019). ESM technology supports and strengthens the professional network and employee ties (Pitafi et al., 2018). Moreover, ESM technology makes performance and communication visible in an organisation and thus increases knowledge, information, and learning (Leonardi et al., 2013).

Previous literature on ESM usage suggests its myriad positive effects



on employees. For instance, ESM facilitates effective communication and offers a collaborative platform through which employees can connect with coworkers, obtain suggestions and seek support on work-related issues (Archer-Brown & Kietzmann, 2018; Pitafi et al., 2020; Tandon, Dhir, Talwar, Kaur, & Mäntymäki, 2021). Madsen and Verhoeven (2016) hold that ESM usage in organisations improves communication among employees and strengthens employees' organisational identity. Gonzalez, Leidner, Riemenschneider, and Koch (2013) explains that internal social media usage is positively related to socialisation and organisational commitment. We argue that ESM usage can satisfy an employee's social needs by helping him/her to create and maintain close ties with co-workers (Rialti, Zollo, Ferraris, & Alon, 2019; Tandon, Dhir, Islam, Talwar, & Mäntymäki, 2021). In an environment of supervisor phubbing, employees' ESM usage may help them maintain their intrinsic motivation by reducing the negative impact of the phubbing stressor. In other words, employees experiencing stress from a phubbing supervisor may be able to neutralise the negative impact of phubbing because of their ESM-facilitated contact with fellow workers, which enables them to discuss job-related matters and seek social and emotional support. Researchers in the area of ESM have noted that unlike previous iterations of organisations' intranet platforms, ESM carries its social features in the work environment (Afraz, Bhatti, Ferraris, & Couturier, 2021; Pitafi et al., 2020). These social features allow employees to seek emotional and social support from their fellow workers to offset the negative impact of ESM on employee outcomes. Our assumption is based on the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), which implies that a loss of resources causes stress among individuals, which may lead to negative outcomes in the workplace. Further, COR theory implies that when people experience a loss of resources in one domain, they attempt to regain resources from another domain. This process of regaining resources may offset the negative impact of workplace stressors (Yousaf et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2019). We argue that supervisor phubbing as a workplace stressor may decrease employees' psychological resources, such as intrinsic motivation; however, ESM usage may provide employees with additional resources, which can offset the negative impact of supervisor phubbing in organisations. Here, we hypothesise the following moderated mediation hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 5a.** *ESM usage moderates the negative association between supervisor phubbing and intrinsic motivation such that the relationship is weaker at higher levels of ESM usage.*

**Hypothesis 5b.** *ESM usage moderates the indirect association between supervisor phubbing and employee engagement through intrinsic motivation such that the relationship is weaker at higher levels of ESM usage.*

**Hypothesis 5c.** *ESM usage moderates the indirect association between supervisor phubbing and job performance through intrinsic motivation such that the relationship is weaker at higher levels of ESM usage.*

## 4. Method

To empirically test our research model, we conducted two studies, one in Pakistan and the second in the United States of America (USA). Scholars such as Johns (2006) and Gelfand, Erez, and Aycan (2007) highlight the significant impact of culture and context on social science studies involving variables of organisational behaviour. Because our study contains variables such as supervisor phubbing, employee job performance, work engagement, and intrinsic motivation, we believe that testing our model both in Pakistan (a collectivistic culture) and in the USA (an individualistic culture) may generate interesting and more generalizable findings across cultures and regions. Our approach thus has the potential to illuminate the impact of supervisor phubbing on employees from different cultures.

### 4.1. Study 1

We conducted Study 1 in the collectivistic culture of Pakistan where we collected primary data from service sector organisations to empirically test our model. The organisations belonged to several industries, including hospitality, health, information technology, education and insurance. Initially, we approached 44 companies with the help of their human resource managers. Of these, 23 companies consented to our efforts to survey their employees. We, therefore, provided our online survey link to the employees of these companies through emails and employee WhatsApp groups. We followed up with the help of the respective human resource managers to collect a sufficient sample of 370 employees from September 2020 to February 2021. Because this period coincided with the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Pakistan, offices were not shut down, and people were working following COVID-19 standard operating procedures. Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, however, and considering other advantages and convenience, we opted to utilise an online survey. The survey contained questions regarding supervisor phubbing, intrinsic motivation, job performance, work engagement, and ESM usage. It also contained questions related to the respondents' demographic information, including age, gender, marital status, duration with the current organisation, and duration with the current supervisor. At the beginning of the survey, we assured the participants of the confidentiality of their information and the anonymity of their identity. Of the 370 respondents, 54% were male. Most (30%) were between 18 and 25 years of age while 21% were between the ages of 30 and 35. Forty-two percent of respondents reported a 1- to 3-year duration with their current supervisor, and 35% reported spending 1–3 years in the current organisation.

### 4.2. Study 2

To validate our findings in an individualistic culture, we conducted another survey in the United States of America (USA) using a data collection service called Prolific Academic Ltd. Conducted in May 2021, this survey garnered a total of 352 responses from employees working in various industries and organisations in the USA. The industries included health, education, information technology, hospitality, service, finance, insurance, retail, etc. We employed the same measurement scales (described below) in both studies. Of the 352 respondents, 63% were males, 43% were between the ages of 30 and 35, 40% were married or living with a partner, 38% had a college education, 27% reported a 1- to 3-year work duration with the current organisation, and 39% reported a duration of 1–3 years with their current supervisor. Table 1 reports detailed demographic information for the samples in both studies.

### 4.3. Survey instrument

We utilised existing scales for the variables in our model, which are discussed in detail below. Because past studies have already validated these scales, we deem them to be true measures of the constructs in our study. The research questionnaire was designed in English because English is the official language of both Pakistan and the USA.

#### 4.3.1. Supervisor phubbing

We used a nine-item scale of supervisor phubbing from previous studies (Roberts & David, 2016, 2017). All nine items were designed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. Sample items include the following: 'During a typical meeting where my boss and I are both present, my boss pulls out and checks his/her cell phone', 'When my boss' cell phone rings or beeps, he/she pulls it out even if we are in the middle of a conversation' and 'When I am talking with my boss, he/she is constantly on his/her cell phone'. The Cronbach's alpha reliability of the scale was 0.74 in Study 1 and 0.94 in Study 2.

**Table 1**  
Demographics of Respondents.

		Study 1		Study 2	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	201	54%	221	63%
	Female	169	46%	131	37%
	Total	370	100%	352	100.00
Age	18–25	112	30%	4	1%
	25–30	64	17%	132	38%
	30–35	76	21%	152	43%
	35–40	54	15%	48	14%
	40 & above	64	17%	16	5%
	Total	370	100%	352	100%
Marital Status	Married/cohabited	214	58%	140	40%
	Unmarried	156	42%	212	60%
	Total	370	100%	352	100%
Duration with supervisor (in years)	<1	30	8%	89	25%
	1 to 3	181	49%	137	39%
	3 to 5	157	42%	76	22%
	5 to 7	2	1%	23	7%
	More than 7	0	0%	27	8%
	Total	370	100%	352	100%
Duration with organization (in years)	<1	81	22%	45	13%
	1 to 3	128	35%	95	27%
	3 to 5	106	29%	63	18%
	5 to 7	37	10%	58	16%
	More than 7	18	5%	91	26%
	Total	370	100%	352	100%

#### 4.3.2. Intrinsic motivation

We adapted the four-item scale of intrinsic motivation from [Jar-amillo, Locander, Spector, and Harris \(2007\)](#). All four items were designed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. A sample item reads as follows: 'I do not need a reason to work; I work because I want to'. The Cronbach's alpha reliability of the scale was 0.81 in Study 1 and 0.93 in Study 2.

#### 4.3.3. Work engagement

To assess our respondents' work engagement, we utilised a nine-item scale from [Schaufeli \(2003\)](#). All nine items were designed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. A sample item reads as follows: 'Time flies when I am working'. The Cronbach's alpha reliability of the scale was 0.88 in Study 1 and 0.93 in Study 2.

#### 4.3.4. Job performance

To assess our respondents' job performance, we used a four-item self-rated job performance scale from [Liden, Wayne, and Stilwell \(1993\)](#). Questions were (i) What is your personal view of your overall effectiveness? (1 = Very ineffective to 5 = Very effective), (ii) Rate the overall performance that you observe at your job (1 = Unacceptable to 5 = Outstanding), (iii) I feel that I am superior to other fellows in my team (1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree) and (iv) Overall, to what extent do you feel you have fulfilled your roles and responsibilities at this job? (1 = Not effectively at all to 5 = Very effectively). The Cronbach's alpha reliability of the scale was 0.85 in Study 1 and 0.86 in Study 2.

#### 4.3.5. ESM usage

We utilised a six-item scale from [Ou and Davison \(2011\)](#) to measure ESM usage. All six items were designed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. A sample item reads as follows: 'I frequently use ESM in my daily work during work-related socialisation'. The Cronbach's alpha reliability of the scale was 0.83 in Study 1 and 0.88 in Study 2.

#### 4.3.6. Control variables

We measured and controlled for the effects of demographics, such as

gender, age, duration with the current supervisor, and duration with the current organisation, because past research has revealed an association between these variables and our study variables ([Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016](#); [Pitafi, Liu, & Cai, 2018](#); [Yousaf et al., 2019](#)). Variables such as gender dissimilarity and duration of working with the supervisor may also be specifically related to supervisor phubbing.

## 5. Analyses and results

Using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) test, we confirmed that the data were normally distributed in both of our studies. Because we assessed the dependent and independent variables of our model from the same source (respondents), common method variance (CMV) also had the potential to impact the results. To rule CMV out, we used the Harman single-factor test and found that the maximum variance explained by one factor was 24.36% in Study 1 and 24.10% in Study 2; both of these values were much below the threshold value of 50%. Therefore, CMV is not an issue in our data. We also calculated variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance values to evaluate the multicollinearity issue in our data and found that in both of our studies, VIF values were less than 1.5 (i.e. < 10) while all of the tolerance values exceeded 0.70 (i.e. > 0.1). These values indicate the absence of multicollinearity in our data.

We further performed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) through AMOS to establish the validity of the constructs used in our research. As reported in [Table 2](#), the AVE values for all constructs in both studies exceeded the minimum required value of 0.5, and the values of factor loadings for all items of each construct exceeded the threshold value of 0.5; therefore, the constructs exhibit good convergent validity ([Hair, Anderson, Babin, & Black, 2010](#)). Scholars such [Hair et al. \(2010\)](#) suggest that discriminant validity is established when the square root values of the AVEs exceed the correlation values between the constructs. As reported in [Table 3](#) (Study 1) and [Table 4](#) (Study 2), all of the square root values of the AVEs exceeded the correlation values between the constructs; therefore, our constructs exhibit good discriminant validity.

### 5.1. Descriptive statistics

[Table 3](#) (Study 1) and [Table 4](#) (Study 2) provide the correlation values and descriptive statistics for the variables used in both studies.

**Table 2**  
Validity of the constructs.

Scales	Study 1					Study 2				
	Loadings	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	Loadings	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV
Supervisor Phubbing	0.77	0.91	0.53	0.06	0.04	0.89	0.95	0.65	0.05	0.03
	0.71									
	0.73									
	0.72									
	0.71									
	0.75									
	0.73									
	0.73									
	0.72									
Intrinsic Motivation	0.70	0.82	0.53	0.48	0.37	0.90	0.94	0.79	0.33	0.13
	0.75									
	0.71									
	0.75									
Job Performance	0.76	0.85	0.58	0.62	0.41	0.94	0.91	0.67	0.23	0.13
	0.74									
	0.76									
	0.80									
Job Engagement	0.75	0.91	0.53	0.62	0.41	0.95	0.93	0.6	0.33	0.20
	0.69									
	0.72									
	0.71									
	0.77									
	0.69									
	0.79									
	0.70									
	0.72									
ESM	0.70	0.86	0.51	0.56	0.35	0.92	0.92	0.70	0.25	0.17
	0.76									
	0.71									
	0.71									
	0.72									
	0.69									

**Table 3**  
Mean, Standard Deviations, and Inter-correlations (Study 1).

Variables	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Subordinate Gender	1.46	0.52										
2. Age	2.71	1.47	0.04									
3. Marital Status	1.42	0.50	0.02	0.05								
4. Duration with current Supervisor	1.51	0.53	0.05	0.08	0.03							
5. Duration in current organization	2.41	1.09	0.02	0.02	0.06	0.07						
6. Supervisor Phubbing	3.02	0.72	0.01	0.05	0.09	0.08	0.06	<b>0.73</b>				
7. Intrinsic Motivation	3.56	1.01	0.05	0.06	0.09	0.01	0.10	-0.15**	<b>0.73</b>			
8. Job Engagement	3.6	0.81	0.04	0	0.04	0.01	0.04	-0.17**	0.59**	<b>0.73</b>		
9. Job Performance	3.72	0.86	0.05	0.02	0.07	0.03	0.04	-0.21**	0.51**	0.67**	<b>0.58</b>	
10. ESM	3.81	0.75	0.03	0	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.09	0.47**	0.59**	0.63**	<b>0.72</b>

Note: N = 370; Significant at \*p < 0.05 (two-tailed) and \*\*p < 0.01 (two-tailed), values in bold and italic are square roots of AVEs.

**Table 4**  
Mean, Standard Deviations, and Inter-correlations (Study 2).

Variables	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
1. Subordinate Gender	1.37	0.48										
2. Age	2.83	0.84	0.15									
3. Marital Status	1.60	0.49	0.12	0.36								
4. Duration with current Supervisor	2.32	1.15	0.15	0.40	0.23							
5. Duration in current organization	3.16	1.40	0.17	0.45	0.31	0.62						
6. Supervisor Phubbing	2.32	1.07	0.14	0.23	0.05	0.24	0.12	<b>0.81</b>				
7. Intrinsic Motivation	3.08	1.24	0.07	0.13	0.16	0.11	0.06	-0.22**	<b>0.89</b>			
8. Job Engagement	2.76	1.00	0.06	0.23	0.11	0.19*	0.17	-0.19**	0.57	<b>0.78</b>		
9. Job Performance	2.81	0.68	0.04	0.12	0.13	0.08	0.11	-0.15**	0.32**	0.44**	<b>0.82</b>	
10. ESM	1.83	0.68	0.03	0.13	0.10	0.07	0.16	0.96	0.21**	0.50**	0.48**	<b>0.84</b>

Note: N = 352; Significant at \*p < 0.05 (two-tailed) and \*\*p < 0.01 (two-tailed), values in bold and italic are square roots of AVEs.

These results provide preliminary support for our hypotheses.

5.2. Hypotheses testing

We tested mediation and moderated mediation models using SPSS PROCESS as suggested by Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007). We conducted a bootstrapping analysis (Shrout & Bolger, 2002) to test the indirect relationships in our model. The bootstrapping test for mediation is considered a more sophisticated and reliable method to test mediation than other methods (Hayes, 2013; Rasheed, Okumus, Weng, Hameed, & Nawaz, 2020). We utilised Model 8 to test the moderated mediation model. Table 5 reports our hypotheses testing results for Study 1. We found that supervisor phubbing is negatively associated with work engagement ( $\beta = -0.10, t = -2.35, p < 0.05$ ), job performance ( $\beta = -0.14, t = -3.78, p < 0.001$ ) and intrinsic motivation ( $\beta = -0.12, t = -2.61, p < 0.05$ ). These results support H1, H2 and H3 in Study 1. Our results further revealed that intrinsic motivation is positively associated with employee work engagement ( $\beta = 0.37, t = 8.76, p < 0.001$ ) and job performance ( $\beta = 0.24, t = 5.57, p < 0.001$ ). Table 5, which reveals significant indirect effects of intrinsic motivation on the associations between supervisor phubbing and employee work engagement (indirect effect =  $-0.01, 95\%, CI [-0.17, -0.02]$ ) and between supervisor phubbing and employee job performance (indirect effect =  $-0.09, 95\%, CI [-0.16, -0.02]$ ), also lends support to H4a and H4b for Study 1.

Table 5 further demonstrates that the interaction term between supervisor phubbing and ESM is significantly associated with intrinsic motivation ( $\beta = 0.08, t = 2.03, p < 0.05$ ), which supports H5a in Study 1. Conditional indirect effects at the specific values of our moderator (ESM) reveal that the relationship between supervisor phubbing and employee work engagement through intrinsic motivation is weaker at higher levels of ESM (effect =  $-0.01, LLCI = -0.05, ULCI = 0.03$ ) than at lower levels of ESM (effect =  $-0.08, LLCI = -0.14, ULCI = -0.02$ ). Table 5 further reveals that the relationship between supervisor phubbing and employee job performance through intrinsic motivation is weaker at higher level of ESM (effect =  $-0.01, LLCI = -0.04, ULCI = 0.02$ ) than at lower levels of ESM (effect =  $-0.05, LLCI = -0.10, ULCI = -0.01$ ). These results support H5b and H5c in Study 1, which posited that the associations between supervisor phubbing and its negative outcomes (i.e. employee work engagement and job performance) through intrinsic motivation are weaker at higher levels of ESM usage.

Table 5  
Results of Moderated mediation (Study 1).

	Mediator				Dependent Variable				Dependent Variable			
	Intrinsic Motivation				Job Engagement				Job Performance			
	B	SE	t	R <sup>2</sup>	B	SE	t	R <sup>2</sup>	B	SE	t	R <sup>2</sup>
Constant	2.07	0.12	17.16	0.25	2.54	0.13	20.25	0.49	2.99	0.14	22.02	0.48
Supervisor Phubbing	-0.12	0.05	-2.61*		-0.10	0.04	-2.35*		-0.14	0.04	-3.78***	
ESM	0.47	0.05	10.27***		0.42	0.05	9.90***		0.51	0.04	11.78***	
Supervisor Phubbing*ESM	0.08	0.04	2.03*		0.08	0.03	2.51*		0.08	0.03	2.33*	
Intrinsic motivation	-	-	-		0.37	0.04	8.76***		0.24	0.04	5.57***	
<b>Indirect effects</b>					<b>Effect</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>
Supervisor Phubbing to Job Engagement through Intrinsic Motivation					-0.10	0.04	-0.17	-0.02				
Supervisor Phubbing to Job Performance through Intrinsic Motivation									-0.09	0.03	-0.16	-0.02
<b>Conditional indirect effects at specific value of moderator (ESM) at ± 1 SD</b>												
<b>Dependent variable</b>					<b>Effect</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>95% LLCI</b>	<b>95% ULCI</b>				
Job (-1SD)					-0.08	0.03	-0.14	-0.02				
Engagement (+1SD)					-0.01	0.03	-0.05	0.03				
<b>Conditional indirect effects at specific value of moderator (ESM) at ± 1 SD</b>												
<b>Dependent variable</b>					<b>Effect</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>95% LLCI</b>	<b>95% ULCI</b>				
Job (-1SD)					-0.05	0.02	-0.10	-0.01				
performance (+1SD)					-0.01	0.02	-0.04	0.02				

Notes: Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown; Bootstrap sample size = 5000; LLCI = Bias corrected lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = Bias corrected upper limit confidence interval; Significant at: \*= $p < 0.05$ , \*\*= $p < 01$ ; and \*\*\*= $p < 0.001$ .

Table 6, which reports our hypotheses testing results for Study 2, reveals that supervisor phubbing is negatively associated with work engagement ( $\beta = -0.23, t = -5.76, p < 0.001$ ), job performance ( $\beta = -0.30, t = -6.45, p < 0.001$ ) and intrinsic motivation ( $\beta = -0.27, t = -4.55, p < 0.001$ ). These results support H1, H2 and H3 in Study 2. Furthermore, intrinsic motivation is positively associated with employee work engagement ( $\beta = 0.63, t = 10.97, p < 0.001$ ) and job performance ( $\beta = 0.11, t = 4.12, p < 0.001$ ). Table 6, which reveals significant indirect effects of intrinsic motivation on the associations between supervisor phubbing and employee work engagement (indirect effect =  $-0.11, 95\%, CI [-0.17, -0.06]$ ) and between supervisor phubbing and employee job performance (indirect effect =  $-0.04, 95\%, CI [-0.07, -0.02]$ ), also lends support to H4a and H4b in Study 2.

Table 6 further demonstrates that the interaction term between supervisor phubbing and ESM is significantly associated with intrinsic motivation ( $\beta = 0.28, t = 3.17, p < 0.05$ ), which supports H5a in Study 2. Conditional indirect effects at the specific values of our moderator (ESM) reveal that the relationship between supervisor phubbing and employee work engagement through intrinsic motivation is weaker at higher level of ESM (effect =  $-0.03, LLCI = -0.09, ULCI = 0.04$ ) than at lower levels of ESM (effect =  $-0.16, LLCI = -0.23, ULCI = -0.10$ ). Table 6 further demonstrates that the relationship between supervisor phubbing and employee job performance through intrinsic motivation is not significant because there is a zero between the lower limit confidence interval and the upper limit confidence interval at both the lower level (effect =  $-0.05, LLCI = 0.08, ULCI = -0.02$ ) and the higher level (effect =  $-0.01, LLCI = 0.03, ULCI = -0.10$ ) of our moderator. These results support H5b but do not support H5c in Study 2. Fig. 2 depicts our results for both studies.

6. Discussion

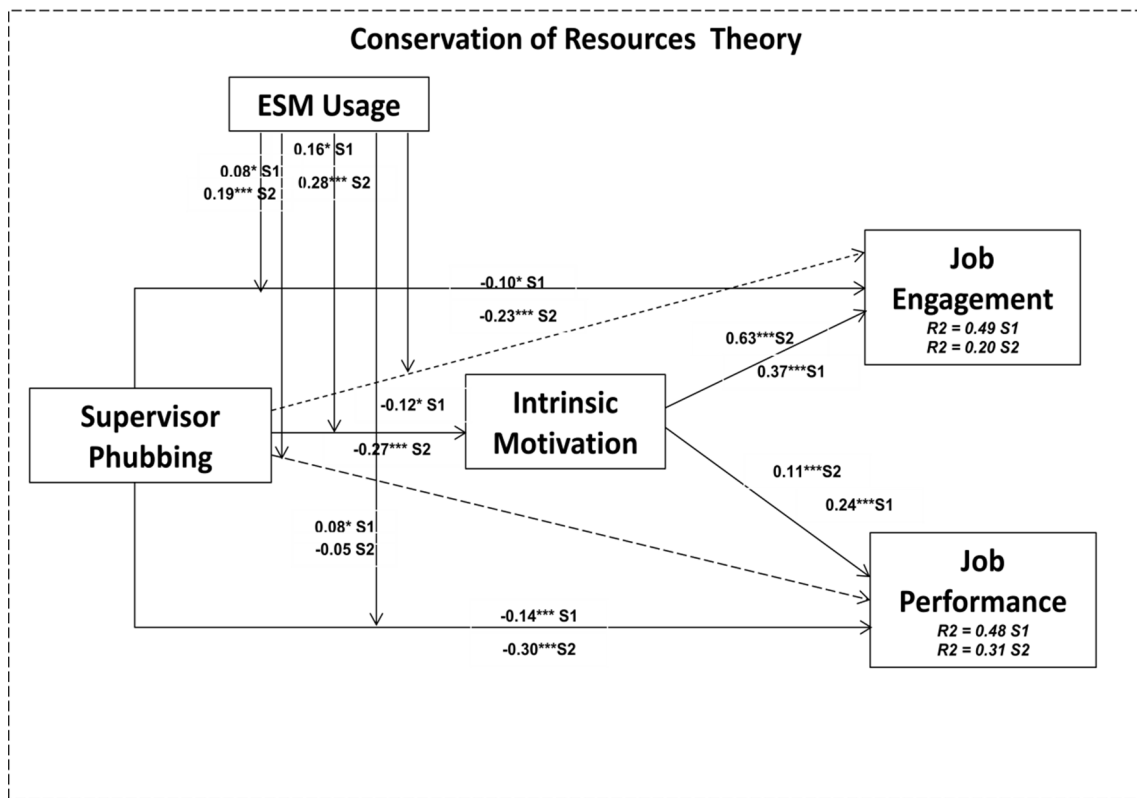
We conducted this study to explore the relationships between supervisor phubbing and its negative employee outcomes while considering the role of ESM usage in organisations in cross-cultural settings. To empirically test our theoretical model, we conducted Study 1 in Pakistan (a collectivistic culture) and Study 2 in the USA (an individualistic culture). Conducting these two studies helps us to generalise our findings across the cultures; indeed, scholars assert that the context of culture is critical for research involving variables in the field of



**Table 6**  
Results of Moderated mediation (Study 2).

	Mediator				Dependent Variable				Dependent Variable			
	Intrinsic Motivation				Job Engagement				Job Performance			
	B	SE	t	R <sup>2</sup>	B	SE	t	R <sup>2</sup>	B	SE	t	R <sup>2</sup>
Constant	3.06	0.23	13.30***	0.13	1.65	0.11	15.46***	0.20	1.47	0.09	16.90***	0.31
Supervisor Phubbing	-2.67	0.06	-4.55***		-0.23	0.04	-5.76***		-0.30	0.05	-6.45***	
ESM	0.45	0.09	4.95***		0.62	0.06	10.82		0.44	0.05	9.46***	
Supervisor Phubbing*ESM	0.28	0.09	3.17***		0.19	0.04	4.71***		-0.05	0.03	-1.07	
Intrinsic motivation					0.63	0.03	10.97***		0.11	0.03	4.12***	
<b>Indirect effects</b>					<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>
Supervisor Phubbing to Job Engagement through Intrinsic Motivation					-0.11	-0.3	-0.17	-0.06				
Supervisor Phubbing to Job Performance through Intrinsic Motivation									-0.04	0.01	-0.07	-0.02
<b>Conditional indirect effects at specific value of moderator (ESM) at ± 1 SD</b>												
<b>Dependent variable</b>			<b>Effect</b>		<b>SE</b>		<b>95% LLCI</b>		<b>95% ULCI</b>			
Job (-1SD)			-0.16		0.03		-0.23		-0.1			
Engagement (+1SD)			-0.03		0.03		-0.09		0.04			
<b>Conditional indirect effects at specific value of moderator (ESM) at ± 1 SD</b>												
<b>Dependent variable</b>			<b>Effect</b>		<b>SE</b>		<b>95% LLCI</b>		<b>95% ULCI</b>			
Job (-1SD)			-0.05		0.02		0.08		-0.02			
performance (+1SD)			-0.01		0.01		-0.03		0.01			

**Notes:** Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown; Bootstrap sample size = 5000; LLCI = Bias corrected lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = Bias corrected upper limit confidence interval; Significant at: \*= $p < 0.05$ , \*\*= $p < 01$ ; and \*\*\*= $p < 0.001$ .



**Fig. 2.** Results of Hypotheses Testing Note: S1 = results from study 1, S2 = results from study 2, dotted arrows show results of indirect effect.

organisational behaviour (Johns, 2006). In both studies, we found that supervisor phubbing (i.e. phone snubbing behaviour) is negatively associated with followers’ intrinsic motivation, work engagement, and job performance, which correspond to our H1, H2, and H3, respectively. We also observed in both studies that intrinsic motivation mediates the relationships between supervisor phubbing and work engagement (H4a) and between supervisor phubbing and job performance (H4b). These findings answer our RQ1, which explored the role of COR in explaining

the association between supervisor phubbing and its employee outcomes. Our findings indicate that low intrinsic motivation (the loss of important psychological resources) is the underlying mechanism by which supervisor phubbing is associated with poor employee job performance and reduced work engagement.

In addition, we identified the boundary condition role of ESM usage. The results from Study 1 revealed that ESM usage in organisations weakens the relationships between supervisor phubbing and its

outcomes (i.e. intrinsic motivation, work engagement, and job performance), while the results from Study 2 revealed that ESM usage in organisations weakens the relationships between supervisor phubbing and its outcomes (i.e. intrinsic motivation and work engagement). These results support H5a, H5b and H5c in Study 1 and H5a and H5b in Study 2. Our findings regarding the moderating role of ESM, in turn, address RQ2, which explores the role of ESM usage in neutralising the impact of supervisor phubbing on employee outcomes. Our findings reveal that ESM is an important boundary condition such that an increase in ESM usage reduces the impact of supervisor phubbing on employees. The rejection of H5c in Study 2 indicates that, in some cases, ESM usage may be unable to reduce the negative impact of supervisor phubbing on employee job performance.

Overall, our results indicate that supervisor phubbing, an increasing phenomenon in the technological era, is a counterproductive workplace behaviour of managers that functions as a source of stress for subordinates, which negatively influences their intrinsic motivation and subsequently decreases their work engagement and job performance. However, employees' usage of ESM in organisations offsets the negative impact of supervisor phubbing on employee performance, work engagement, and intrinsic motivation.

### 6.1. Theoretical implications

Our study makes substantial theoretical contributions to the literature on supervisor phubbing and ESM. By suggesting that supervisor phubbing is negatively associated with employee work engagement and job performance through intrinsic motivation, for instance, our findings provide a novel explanation for why and how supervisor phubbing is toxic in organisations. Recently, scholars such as Roberts and David (2020) have stressed that research should explore the underlying mechanisms in the relationships between supervisor phubbing and its negative outcomes. Our study identifies one such novel psychological mechanism in the form of intrinsic motivation to explain the negative associations between supervisor phubbing and employee job outcomes. In this way, our work not only advances understanding of supervisor phubbing and its relationship with various employee outcomes but also aligns with COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), which implies that stressors (in our case, supervisor phubbing) cause a loss of resources, which further engenders negative outcomes. A review of the literature reveals not only that the topic of phubbing is new but that the majority of past research has focused on partner phubbing (Cizmeci, 2017; Roberts & David, 2016). Only a few studies have examined the topic of phubbing by managers (Roberts & David, 2017, 2020; Yasin et al., in press). In this regard, our study is important because it investigates supervisor phubbing and its impact on key employee outcomes (i.e. work engagement and job performance).

Second, our findings reveal the important mediating role of intrinsic motivation in the association between supervisor phubbing and employee outcomes. We theorised supervisor phubbing as a stressor for subordinates and identified the conservation of resources theory as the best description of this relationship. Intrinsic motivation is a psychological resource that supervisor phubbing depletes, and this loss of resources ultimately reduces employee job performance and work engagement. One possible explanation for the mediating role of intrinsic motivation is COR, which explains how and why supervisor phubbing is associated with negative employee outcomes. We believe that our use of this resource tenant view of COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) to explain our model regarding the outcomes of supervisor phubbing adds substantial value to the existing knowledge on the topic.

Next, our findings regarding the boundary condition role of ESM on the direct and indirect relationships between supervisor phubbing and its negative employee outcomes are particularly novel and make a significant contribution to the literature on supervisor phubbing and ESM technology. We find that employee usage of ESM offsets the association between supervisor phubbing and negative employee outcomes. While

past research has explored the negative impact of supervisor phubbing behaviour on followers' outcomes (Chotpitayasuonondh & Douglas, 2018; Roberts & David, 2017), the existing literature has not explored the role of ESM in the context of supervisor phubbing. Our study thus offers new insights and fills an important research gap by proposing a technology-related factor (ESM) as a boundary condition that can offset the negative outcomes of supervisor phubbing. We believe that the boundary condition role of ESM in our theoretical model derives from its social interaction features, which help workers to offset the negative impact of stressors, such as supervisor phubbing. Scholars such as Pitafi et al. (2020) have argued that ESM usage enhances employee agility (proactivity, resilience, and adaptability). These positive features could account for the moderating role of ESM in the current study.

Another important contribution of our study is the empirical testing of our model across cultures. Testing our theoretical model in both a collectivistic (Pakistan) and an individualistic (USA) culture, we uncovered similar findings. This cross-cultural approach helps us to generalise our insights across the cultures. A possible explanation for the similar results from both surveys could be that in the technological era, supervisor phubbing is a serious issue in organisations regardless of culture. Because Smartphone use is popular across diverse cultures, supervisor phubbing is likely equally harmful to subordinates in individualistic and collectivistic cultures.

### 6.2. Practical implications

Our study carries several practical implications for workers, managers, and organisations. For instance, our work demonstrates the negative relationship of supervisor phubbing with important employee outcomes, such as work engagement and job performance, and with intrinsic motivation. This suggests that organisations and managers must think seriously about and take steps to address the increasing prevalence of supervisor phubbing in the workplace. Effective measures might include training and awareness programmes specifically designed to teach managers not to engage in phubbing at work.

Our finding regarding the role of intrinsic motivation explains the detrimental effects of supervisor phubbing on employee performance and engagement in organisations. It also helps organisations to understand the role of employee intrinsic motivation in the workplace. In turn, our work suggests that organisations should find ways to increase employee intrinsic motivation. In addition to positive leadership styles (Conchie, 2013; Jensen & Bro, 2018), several other factors positively influence employee intrinsic motivation, and organisations can capitalise on these factors to offset the negative impact of supervisor phubbing. For instance, factors such as job design and work environment (Rasheed, Jamad, Pitafi, & Iqbal, 2020) as well as leadership style (Yidong & Xinxin, 2013) can help to maintain employees' intrinsic motivation. Organisations and managers can thus work to promote these factors while also discouraging supervisor phubbing to maintain employees' intrinsic motivation at the level required to ensure adequate job performance and work engagement.

In addition, our study identifies the important boundary condition role of ESM on the association between supervisor phubbing and employee negative outcomes. This suggests that individuals, managers, and organisations may utilise ESM not only to enhance employee communication within organisations but also to offset the negative impact of supervisor phubbing on key employee outcomes, such as intrinsic motivation, job performance, and work engagement. Consistent with our argument that social features of ESM are likely to reduce the negative impact of supervisor phubbing on employees, organisations can further improve the social features of ESM.

### 6.3. Limitations and future research directions

The findings of our study must be viewed in light of its limitations. For instance, although we conducted two studies in different cultural

settings, we collected our data at a single point in time from one source; therefore, the risk of CMV—suggested by researchers such as Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff (2012)—persists despite our use of statistical techniques to verify that CMV was not an issue and our implementation of some procedural remedies to address it (e.g. maintaining confidentiality and anonymity of respondents and their information). Future researchers might thus propose experimental and longitudinal research designs to verify our model. Second, we explored intrinsic motivation as the underlying psychological reason for the association between supervisor phubbing and its outcomes, including job performance and work engagement. However, future researchers can suggest alternative mechanisms for these relationships. Self-efficacy, for example, might be a valuable alternative mechanism in this context (Özek & Ferraris, 2020); supervisor phubbing may reduce employees' self-efficacy, which would further lead to adverse employee outcomes. Finally, we explored ESM as a moderator on the association between supervisor phubbing and its outcomes in the form of job performance and work engagement. In turn, future studies can develop and test additional boundary conditions—once again, including self-efficacy—in our model. A moderator on the second stage of our model could be particularly interesting in this context.

## 7. Conclusion

Supervisor phubbing, or managers' phone snubbing behaviour, is an increasing phenomenon in the era of technology when Smartphone usage is at an all-time high (Garrido, Issa, Esteban, & Delgado, 2021). While previous research has explored some antecedents and outcomes of supervisor phubbing, a comprehensive model to understand the underlying reasons for the association between supervisor phubbing and its employee outcomes was lacking. This study investigated the relationships between supervisor phubbing and employee outcomes, such as intrinsic motivation, work engagement and job performance in cross-cultural settings. We designed and empirically tested a moderated mediation model, which revealed the critical roles of intrinsic motivation as a mediator and ESM as a moderator in the association between supervisor phubbing and its outcomes (job performance and employee work engagement). Our model has unique features, and our surveys have produced interesting findings, which carry notable implications for researchers and practitioners in the field of technology and the workplace.

### CRedit authorship contribution statement

**Saira Yousaf:** Conceptualization, Data Curation, Writing-Original draft, Analysis, Methodology, Project Administration. **Muhammad Imran Rasheed:** Conceptualization, data curation, Review and Editing, analysis, methodology, and project administration. **Puneet Kaur:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Nazrul Islam:** Writing – review & editing, Conceptualization, Supervision. **Amandeep Dhir:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Conceptualization.

### Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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