

Akıllı Telefon Bağımlılığının Çalışma Hayatına Yansımalarının Yönetici Sosyotelizmi Bağlamında Değerlendirilmesi

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ÖZET

Dijitalleşme bireylerin sosyal hayatında olduğu gibi çalışma hayatında da birçok fırsat ve kolaylık sağlamaktadır. Ancak dijitalleşmenin sunduğu imkânlarla birlikte dijital teknolojilerin aşırı kullanımı dijital bağımlılığı da beraberinde getirmektedir. Son yıllarda giderek yaygınlaşan dijital bağımlılık türlerinden biri de akıllı telefon bağımlılığıdır. Geçmişte yalnızca iletişim amacıyla kullanılan telefonların yerini alan akıllı telefonların kullanım kapsamı genişlemekte, kullanım sıklığı yoğunlaşmakta ve buna bağlı olarak akıllı telefon bağımlılığı artmaktadır. Akıllı telefon bağımlılığındaki artış çalışma hayatına da yansımakta ve bireysel olduğu kadar örgütsel anlamda da bir takım sorunlara yol açmaktadır. Yöneticilerin çalışanlar ile iletişiminde odaklanma problemi ve dikkat dağınıklığına neden olabilen akıllı telefon bağımlılığı örgütsel güveni ve verimliliği düşürebilmektedir. Yönetici sosyotelizmi olarak ifade edilen bu durumun sonuçlarının kapsamlı bir şekilde değerlendirilmesi dijital bağımlılığın bireysel ve örgütsel yansımalarının görülmesi açısından oldukça önemlidir. Çalışmada, akıllı telefon bağımlılığının çalışma hayatında yarattığı sorunlar yönetici sosyotelizmi bağlamında ele alınmakta ve böylece dijital bağımlılığın genişleyen etki alanının ortaya konulması amaçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dijital bağımlılık, Akıllı telefon bağımlılığı, Çalışma hayatı, Yönetici sosyotelizmi

Evaluation of The Reflection of Smartphone Addiction on Working Life in The Context of Boss Phubbing

ABSTRACT

Digitalization provides many opportunities and conveniences in both the social and working life of individuals. However, along with the opportunities offered by digitalization, excessive use of digital technologies also brings about digital addiction. One type of digital addiction that has become increasingly common in recent years is smartphone addiction. Smartphones, which have replaced telephones that were once used solely for communication, are being used more and more frequently, and consequently, smartphone addiction is increasing. The rise in smartphone addiction is also reflected in working life and is causing a number of problems, both individually and organizationally. Smartphone addiction, which can lead to focus problems and distractions in managers' communication with employees, can reduce organizational trust and productivity. A comprehensive assessment of the consequences of this phenomenon, referred to as boss phubbing is crucial for understanding the individual and organizational reflections of digital addiction. This study examines the problems created by smartphone addiction in working life within the context of boss phubbing, aiming to reveal the expanding scope of digital addiction.

Keywords: Digital addiction, Smartphone addiction, Working life, Boss phubbing

INTRODUCTION

Addiction is defined as a treatable disorder of volition that leads to behavioral and physical impairments in individuals and causes alterations in the individual upon the withdrawal of the addictive state or substance. Addiction can be substance-based as well as behavioral (Altıkulaç, 2022, p. 4). One of these types of addiction is digital addiction, which has become increasingly widespread in recent years.

Developing and emerging digital innovations have brought along numerous conveniences in human life. These developments in the digital sphere have also contributed to the advancement and progress of phone technology, which we utilize as a means of communication. Today, phones have ceased to be merely communication tools and have transformed into pocket-sized computers that assist individuals in accessing the internet at any time and place, as well as enabling tasks such as sharing videos, images, and documents, conducting banking transactions, shopping, and checking electronic mail. Along with the emerging changes, smartphones, which respond to all other needs in addition to communication and socialization, have become an integral part of our daily life (Özdemir & Çetiner, 2021, p. 1680). However, the excessive and uncontrolled use of smartphones can lead to addiction and certain behavioral disorders. Phubbing, which is considered one of these behavioral disorders, is known as an individual ignoring those around them by focusing on their smartphone. Consequently, phubbing negatively affects individuals' communication and social relations (Sayiner & Akbağ, 2023, p. 101).

The transfer of computer technologies to smartphones has led to the prominence of smartphone addiction and the phubbing behavior it creates. Although individuals are aware of the effects of phubbing behavior, they can still exhibit phubbing behavior in environments where they can socialize (Karadağ et al., 2016, p. 224). This behavioral pattern can be observed in working life as well as in social life. The exhibition of phubbing behavior by supervisors is expressed as boss phubbing and causes a decrease in employees' productivity and sense of belonging. In this context, the study evaluates the reflections of smartphone addiction on working life within the framework of boss phubbing, addressing its individual and organizational effects.

1. DIGITAL ADDICTION AND ITS SYMPTOMS

Digital addiction is a behavioral disorder defined by individuals' uncontrolled use of digital tools such as the internet, digital games, social media, or smartphones to a degree that impairs functionality. Although the American Psychiatric Association (APA) has not yet officially recognized it as a diagnostic category, studies demonstrate that digital addiction has psychological, neurobiological, and social effects (Fauth-Bühler & Mann, 2017, p. 351). Especially during childhood, individuals can become dependent due to internal causes such as digital addiction, socialization, stress relief, efficient time management, and financial gain, as well as external causes like environment, family, and digital tools. Children who become addicted can experience problems regarding their academic success, in addition to their biological, psychological, and familial issues (Paslı & Aslantürk, 2020, p. 370).

While the excessive use of digital technologies manifests as a state of being "digitally dependent," its over-usage leads to health problems, negatively affects individuals' communication skills, and can also impact society as a whole. If there is no restriction on digital usage, it is anticipated that individuals may emerge who lead a life detached from real life and prefer the virtual world over real activities, that the daily routine will shift, and that digitally dependent individuals may pose major problems for society in the future. It is thought that technological innovations enveloping all areas of life will not only diminish individuals' abilities to perceive, listen, and solve problems, but will also significantly increase the number of attached and addicted individuals (Çağatay, 2024, p. 154).

Approximately three-quarters of the world's population uses the internet. Billions of mobile devices are actively used, and a significant portion of them connects to the internet. Mobile data usage rates are also increasing year by year. A heavy data flow occurs daily on social media platforms, and communication is maintained largely through the digital environment (Yengin, 2019, p. 137).

Nowadays, notifications from Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter (X), and email applications have assumed a highly central position in individuals' daily lives. These notifications often cause individuals to interrupt their current work and feel the need to check the screen. The increasing number of notifications from different digital platforms can create an urge for instant checking and cause distraction in individuals, regardless of whether the content of the notification is important or not. These notifications cause the individual to freeze for a short period or direct themselves directly toward the relevant digital source (Peper & Harvey, 2018, p. 4).

When the symptoms of digital addiction are examined, the concept of "salience" primarily stands out. This state means that technology occupies a central place in the individual's inner thoughts and that mental preoccupation is constantly directed toward digital tools. The symptom of "withdrawal" refers to the state of restlessness, stress, and anxiety that emerges when technology is not being used. In the dimension of "conflict" the individual neglects the duties and responsibilities they need to fulfill due to digital use, which can lead to problems in family, work, and social relationships. The dimension of "relapse" is defined as the desire and behavior of returning to old behavioral patterns despite the individual's efforts to reduce or control their digital use. The dimension of "tolerance" refers to the need for longer or more intensive digital use over time in order to achieve the same level of gratification. In this context, digital tools can become a means of compensation for the gratification that cannot be obtained in daily life. When evaluating digital addiction, focusing solely on the duration of time spent with technological tools is insufficient. What is crucial is the negative consequences that the time spent creates in the individual's life. The time spent can manifest as both a cause and a consequence of addiction. Furthermore, the changes occurring in the individual's behaviors, mood, social relationships, and academic or occupational performance must also be comprehensively evaluated (Ünal, 2024, p. 15).

Among the symptoms of digital addiction, irritability, attention deficit, focus problems, sleep disorders, migraines, and cardiac arrhythmia are listed. In order to determine digital addiction, an individual's daily life habits are questioned. Behaviors such as conducting the majority of

daily tasks over the internet, being unable to stay apart from one's mobile phone, checking the phone as soon as waking up in the morning, carrying a backup charger, experiencing the "fear of missing out," decreases in social relationships, and neglecting responsibilities are evaluated among indicators of addiction (Yengin, 2019, p. 140).

2. SMARTPHONE ADDICTION

Smartphones offer features advanced enough to perform many tasks traditionally executed by computers, such as data transmission, emailing, internet access, instant messaging, and viewing digital-visual content in daily life, as well as data transmission within intra-institutional systems. In the coming years, smartphones, notebooks, and tablets are expected to become the primary mobile devices for accessing information via internet connectivity (Göymen & Ayas, 2019, pp. 38, 46). Smartphones, owing to their portability, enable individuals to remain continuously in contact, while combining multiple functions such as communicating with family and friends via the internet or calls, playing games, and listening to music into a single device. This situation enables individuals to immediately access numerous activities in terms of time management (Kangas & Kuure, 2003, p. 8). Along with technological advancements, the downsizing of digital devices into portable formats has increased the impact and pervasive power of the internet. Particularly children, adolescents, and young adults belonging to Generations Alpha, Z, and Y are more profoundly affected by this phenomenon. Digital games, which rank among the leading types of content appealing to their interests, further reinforce the impact of the internet on these age groups (Yalçın & Bertiz, 2019, p. 29).

Smartphones, which are among the indispensable devices of our lives, can be utilized for various purposes. The new environments constructed as virtual worlds not only detach the individual from real life by inducing a sense of freedom but also lead to social isolation. Loneliness, emerging either by individual choice or as a necessity, drives the individual toward an existential quest within society. Digital devices, such as smartphones, and social networks have opened the door for individuals engaged in this quest. The individual, who becomes isolated within crowded environments in urban life and retreats to a corner with their smartphone, seeks to join the massive crowds in the digital world, such as social media, which eliminates the concepts of socialization and time. Consequently, individuals who are socially excluded and experiencing loneliness have begun to excessively use smartphones, which they perceive as a lifeline to hold onto. The weakening of social and familial relationships in modern societies plays a significant role in the spread of smartphone addiction. This type of addiction has substantial impacts on both physical and psychological health. Excessive use gives rise to behaviors such as an increase in impulse control problems, a decrease in academic success, an inability to communicate, and a lack of self-acceptance (Bal & Balcı, 2021, p. 3223).

Furthermore, it is known that blue light, which is also present in smartphones, possesses the shortest wavelength and the highest energy. This light, constituting approximately one-third of visible light, is heavily present in phones, computers, tablets, and televisions. Blue light emitted from technological devices is known to be harmful. It can be toxic to the retinal layer of the eye. Additionally, blue light disrupts the brain's perception of day and night, causing the brain to perceive even nighttime hours as daytime. This situation not only impairs sleep quality but

can also lead to an inability to focus on tasks and a disruption of concentration due to dopamine imbalance. Consequently, it can produce negative impacts on both physical and mental health (Pelit, 2022, p. 231).

3. THE CONCEPT OF BOSS PHUBBING

While general phubbing, which has emerged as a novel concept, refers to individuals engaging with their phones while communicating with one another, the concept of boss phubbing is defined as a supervisor attending to their phone when they are together with their employee. In today's world, where the widespread use of smart devices and phones allows for many issues such as information exchange and communication to be resolved solely through a phone without the need for anything else, addressing the phenomenon of boss phubbing is of vital importance (Özdemir, 2020, p. 135).

Information production speed and processing capacity can double approximately every two years. Despite all these advancements, an individual's capacity to manage the continuously expanding flow of information can remain stagnant. A major conflict between an individual's limited capacity to process documents and information and the increasing indispensability of smartphones manifests itself more prominently in workplaces. The boundaries between an individual's private life and work life have become increasingly complex. This complexity can not only reduce organizational productivity but also affect the relationship between supervisors and employees. The trust-based relationship between the employee and the supervisor holds a significant place in organizational commitment. If this relationship is interrupted by the supervisor's phubbing behavior, the sense of belonging may be shaken and the relationship can be damaged. An individual's disregard for the other party due to smartphone use is expressed as boss phubbing within organizations (Altıkulaç, 2022, p. 13). Boss phubbing is defined as a supervisor's disregard for their employees in the workplace by engaging with their smartphone (Altıkulaç & Kanbur, 2025, p. 120).

4. INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTS OF BOSS PHUBBING

Organizations strive to satisfy their target audiences within their field of operation and to transform these individuals into loyal, committed customers. The quality of the service provided is regarded as the primary factor in cultivating satisfied customers. Another aspect that influences quality is the employees' sense of belonging and commitment to their work. In a continuously changing and transforming external environment, the most critical element in competing with rivals is made possible by possessing employees who are difficult to replace. To achieve organizational efficiency, communication between employees and supervisors must be carried out effectively (Özdemir & Çetiner, 2021, p. 1682).

In working life, good communication encompasses not only the flow of technical data but also the entirety of factors such as mutual trust among employees, a sense of belonging, and cooperation. In today's world, the shift toward smart devices instead of open communication, driven by technological advancements, can create difficulties in interpersonal interaction. The concept of phubbing, as one of the communication problems, has become an increasing research

topic in the social and organizational relationships of individuals in working life. Alongside technological developments, significant changes can be experienced in individual attention levels. The phubbing behavior, which emerges alongside the uncontrolled use of technological devices, slows down face-to-face communication and undermines socialization within organizations. In addition to all of these, it can negatively affect organizational commitment and alignment. The quality of interaction within the organization has become the main factor that determines or constrains organizational productivity and satisfaction, particularly in areas where information is intensively transmitted (Karadağ et al., 2016, p. 224).

Research shows that boss phubbing negatively affects employees' job satisfaction, sense of trust, belonging, intrinsic motivation, and performance. Furthermore, it can increase the distance from the supervisor, induce social exclusion, and heighten psychological ill-being; it can also hinder being present on duty, trigger workplace incivility, and lead to behaviors such as compulsive internet use. At the same time, findings indicate that the supervisor's phubbing behavior increases the amount of phone use among subordinates and creates a behavioral spillover effect (Dedahanov, 2025, p. 1133).

CONCLUSION

With the acceleration of technological developments, smartphones have become an inseparable part of individuals' daily lives. These devices, which can simultaneously fulfill numerous functions such as communication, access to information, managing business processes, and social interaction, are also intensively utilized in working life. However, alongside the conveniences provided by smartphones, it is observed that uncontrolled and unconscious usage leads to various negative consequences at both the individual and organizational levels. In this context, the study evaluates the reflections of smartphone addiction on working life within the framework of boss phubbing.

Smartphone addiction also brings along time management problems in working life. Employees' intense engagement with social media, messaging applications, and digital content during business processes can lead to a decrease in work productivity. Similarly, supervisors turning to digital devices during meetings, interviews, or communication with employees can negatively affect the corporate communication culture. This situation becomes an important factor affecting not only individual performance but also within-team harmony and organizational productivity.

Consequently, smartphone addiction and boss phubbing are among the critical concepts that influence organizational communication, employee motivation, and job performance in today's working life. Therefore, it is of great importance for organizations to build consciousness regarding the use of digital technology, organize digital awareness training programs for employees and supervisors, and develop practices that support a healthy communication culture within the workplace. While benefiting from the advantages that technology provides to working life, a balanced approach to usage that will not damage human relations and organizational communication must be adopted.

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