LOOK AT ME: EXPLORING PHUBBING IN ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXTS- IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

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Abstract

This paper explores the phenomenon of phubbing in the organizational context, its implications, and potential remedies beneficial to the organization. This viewpoint is prepared by the author to offer practical suggestions to counter the phenomenon of phubbing by highlighting relevant academic studies. Phubbing is phenomenon which is rapidly increasing as a menace. Organizations need to put in place measures to help clearly set the norms of expected behaviour, leading to positive work culture. This article helps managers and researchers by condensing the knowledge to date in an easy-to-understand way, thereby saving time.

Keywords: Phubbing, communication, technology, interaction

Introduction

In the last decade. advances in communication technology have made interacting with others, be it one on one, one to many, or many to many, a reality (Gummesson,2004). Smartphones have emerged as the go to devices when people want to go online and is an integral part of their lives (Oulasvirta et al., 2012) due to their ability to connect with near and dear ones and the ones who are absent as well (Do & Gatica-Perez, 2013). Despite its many advantages, people are slowly noticing its adverse impact on their health and relationships (Campbell and Kwak,2010, Lee et al.,2014), especially closeness and the quality of interaction in everyday interactions (Turkle,2012). This phenomenon of "Phubbing" is conceptualized as snubbing someone during social interaction by focusing on your phone rather than paying attention (Haigh,2015).

Phubbing by Boss/Supervisor

Trust is critical for employee engagement between a boss and his subordinates (Mulki et al., 2015; Weigl et al., 2010). When an employee's attempts to interact are disrupted by the latter's use of their phone, potentially damaging their relationship, this phenomenon is known as boss phubbing. Constant phone usage while interacting with employees by their supervisor may create the impression that the former doesn't have their best interest in mind (Abeele et al., 2016).

Based on the tenets of expectancy violations theory (Burgoon and Le Poire, 1993), individuals have specific expectations or norms of acceptable behavior in a given social environment. When a partner violates them, the impacted person tries to understand the cause of such behavior. Most individuals, be it at work or in social situations, expect others to give their undivided attention during an interaction. Based on social presence theory (Short et al., 1976), when two people interact, the relevance of nonverbal clues like leaning in close to their discussion partner, maintaining eye contact, and responding quickly (Abeele, 2019) reaffirms that the conversation partner is attentive while a distracted one is not.

As a result, supervisors must be physically present and pay attention to their subordinates while multicommunicating in front of another person so that it doesn't impair one's perceived professionalism and impact one's affective relationships in a detrimental manner. (Cameron and Webster, 2011).

Phubbing By Customers

Consumer incivility can be traced to Grandey, Dicketer, and Singh (2004) wherein they found that employees reported verbal aggressiveness ten times per day on average, or around 15%–20% of all calls received. However, frontline employees (FLEs) are expected to treat customers with politeness, consideration, and diplomacy while interacting with them, exhibit a pleasant demeanour (Hogan et al., 1984) while taking ownership of their needs (Popli and Rizvi, 2017). Employees with a higher levels of service orientation tend to be more accommodating towards customers, especially under adverse circumstances. It is known that acts of incivility are more common than acts of assault (Sliter et al., 2012). Customers feel a sense of entitlement to behave the way they expect service providers to put up with such behaviors (Yagil ,2008). Usage of mobile phones leads to feeling ignored, no sense of connection, and reduced conversation quality (Przybylski and Weinstein, 2012), resulting in emotional labour (Grandey et al., 2004, 2005) faking emotions while upholding a serving attitude. It can impact employees' affective states leading to employee sabotage (Dallimore et al., 2007 Skarlicki et al., 2008) and reduced life satisfaction (Appelberg et al., 1996).

Conclusion

Organizations should facilitate more face-to-face interactions and make people accessible over phone calls to increase relationship satisfaction. Supervisors must make conscious efforts to build healthy relationships with their subordinates. Organizations can relook at their policies to explore anonymous ratings by subordinates about their mentor regarding their ability, attentiveness, etc. (Robert and David,2017). Another way to tackle this issue could be to formulate policies specific to smartphone usage in the organization by creating "safe zones" wherein the employees can use their devices for a limited time for making a quick call etc., and "red zones" wherein the usage of smartphone is restricted. This will help clarify to everyone in the organization to act accordingly and curb this menace. These red zones can also be for the customer; the FLEs can politely request the customers during the service by explaining politely how it has a detrimental impact on the co-creation of services and their experience.

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