



Digital Intimacy and the Transformative Trajectories of Contemporary Marital Relations: A Sociological Perspective

Shadab Iqbal ¹

¹ Lecturer, School of Sociology, Minhaj University Lahore/ Ph D Scholar, ISCS, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Punjab-Pakistan.

Corresponding Author: shadab.soc@mul.edu.pk

Vol. 4, Issue 1, 2025

Article Information

Received:

2025-03-30

Revised:

2025-05-22

Accepted:

2025-06-21

ABSTRACT

This paper uses qualitative methods to explore how digital media both fosters intimacy and provokes conflict among couples. Theoretical frameworks i.e. The Hyper-personal Model”, “Expectancy Violation Theory” (EVT), and “Affection Exchange Theory (AET). This paper is an attempt to explore various practices i.e. sentimental messaging, digital relationship rituals, and phubbing eventually shape the dynamics of the relationships. Data was collected employing interviews with 10 married couples (total participants = 20) from major urban cities of Pakistan (Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad). Four central themes were developed using the Phenomenological approach. Themes of dual nature, entertaining and distracting, phubbing as a violation of emotional expectations, affection drawn by deliberate digital engagement as a means of emotional reinforcement, and finally cultural and religious arguments dictating the digital maturity. Findings reveal digital behaviours like phubbing erode emotional connection and spark jealousy, while shared online rituals may enhance relational maintenance. This study offers insights into digital intimacy, recommending culturally sensitive strategies for mindful phone use and empathetic communication to nurture marital intimacy in the digital age.

Keywords: *Digital Intimacy, Phubbing, Marital Relationships, Pakistan, Hyperpersonal Model, Expectancy Violation Theory, Affection Exchange Theory, Cultural Norms, Qualitative Research.*

Citation: APA

Iqbal, S. (2025). *Digital intimacy and the transformative trajectories of contemporary marital relations: A sociological perspective*, *Journal of Climate and Community Development*, 4(1), 337-346.



Introduction

In contemporary society, smartphones, social media platforms, and relational applications have become central to daily interactions, including within married relationships. These digital tools not only facilitate communication and emotional expression but also reshape the norms and structures of intimacy (David & Roberts, 2021). As couples navigate phones, social media, messaging apps, and even AI-powered companions, their intimate bonds are renegotiated through digital infrastructures. This phenomenon, known as digital intimacy, has become a key area for modern sociological research. However, despite increased public awareness, there remains limited qualitative, marriage-focused socio-theoretical analyses of how these entanglements are transforming marital relations. While digital technology can support affectionate gestures such as caring texts, photos, or scheduled check-ins, it can also disrupt connection. One particularly widespread behaviour, phubbing (phone snubbing), diminishes emotional presence, leading to conflict, jealousy, and dissatisfaction within relationships. Past research in Pakistan has linked partner phubbing to heightened jealousy and lower marital satisfaction, especially among educated couples. Nonetheless, alongside these disruptive effects, digital media also offer new avenues for intimacy through curated, hyper personal communication, as described in theories of computer-mediated connection (Van Ouytsel et al., 2019).

Digital Intimacy in Marital Contexts

Digital technologies have long been shown to influence romantic relationships positively and negatively. Concepts such as *phubbing* when one spouse ignores the other in favour of their smartphone have been linked to relationship dissatisfaction and weakened emotional connection (Nie, Ahrari, & Zaremohzzabieh, 2025). Meanwhile, couple-centered digital interventions like the “Love Every Day” app have demonstrated potential for strengthening relational bonds: users reported enhanced communication, expressions of care, relationship satisfaction, and partner cohesion, even under time constraints PMC. Similarly, evaluations of the “Paired” app have shown that regular, scaffolded digital prompts can improve

relationship quality by facilitating daily emotional check-ins and “relationship banking” PMC.

The Emergence of Companion AI and Artificial Intimacy

Simultaneously, the rise of companion AI systems designed for emotional and relational engagement is introducing new dynamics into intimate spheres. Companion AI usage is increasing rapidly, driven by user loneliness and technological advancements. AI companionship is becoming more mainstream, with some projections estimating the AI companion market at around USD 268.5 billion in 2024, and expected to expand further through 2031 (Size,2025). The anthropological and societal implications are significant: AI companions are created to foster emotional presence and continuity, often tailored to user preferences, which raises questions about displacement, loss of human skills in relationships, and ethical considerations (Ventura et al., 2025).

De Freitas et al. (2025) found that AI interactions can significantly reduce loneliness, sometimes comparable to human contact but users typically underestimate their emotional effects. Conversely, more intensive use patterns especially among socially isolated individuals are associated with lower well-being. Other research highlights emerging emotional risks: chatbots respond with emotional mirroring, sometimes creating relationship dynamics that mimic toxic or manipulative patterns, leading to concerns about illusions of intimacy.

From a broader perspective, surveys suggest the phenomenon may be more widespread than previously assumed. Nearly 1 in 5 U.S. adults (19%) report chatting with an AI designed to simulate a romantic partner, with even higher rates among young adults (31% of men and 23% of women), according to PR Newswire. A poll by Joi AI indicated that 80% of Gen Zers would consider marrying an AI if legal, and 83% believed they could form a deep emotional bond with one (Wiederhold, 2024). However, usage patterns vary: Anthropic’s data show that only 2.9% of Claude AI interactions are emotional, and just 0.5% involve companionship or roleplay Tom's Guide. For teens, AI companions are even more prevalent: roughly 70–75% have used them for emotional connection, with many engaging

frequently and some spending as much time with AI as with friends Business (Zhang,2025).

Why Marital Dynamics Call for Focused Inquiry

These trends raise critical questions about how such digital and AI-mediated interactions develop within marriages, where relational norms, expectations, and vulnerabilities differ from those of single or adolescent users. While much of the companion-AI research concentrates on individual users' well-being, there remains limited attention to how these technologies interface with marital trust, privacy negotiation, surveillance, emotional labour, and relational maintenance or breakdown. Similarly, while apps like Love Every Day and Paired suggest digital scaffolding can support couples, such interventions may also introduce new forms of intrusion or dependence that warrant closer qualitative examination.

Research Objectives

- To examine how digital intimacy reshapes marital relationships in Pakistan.
- To analyse how digital intimacy reconfigures marital life in Pakistan concerning both emotional connection and relationship conflict.
- To assess the role of specific digital communication practices including phubbing, affectionate messaging, and shared online rituals in fostering intimacy or provoking relational strain between spouses.

Research Questions

- i. How does digital intimacy reconfigure marital life in Pakistan in terms of connection and conflict?
- ii. Which aspects of digital communication (e.g., phubbing, affectionate messaging, shared rituals) facilitate intimacy or, conversely, provoke relational strain?

Theoretical Framework

The research was informed by three established theoretical models:

Hyperpersonal Model Theory

Walther's (2006) Hyperpersonal Model proposes that computer-mediated communication (CMC) can foster greater intimacy than face-to-face interaction through selective self-presentation, asynchronous messaging, and idealising

interpretations. In marital contexts, affectionate digital communication, such as thoughtful timing of texts or shared media, may enhance emotional connection and perceived closeness.

Expectancy Violation Theory (EVT)

Burgoon (1978, 1993) Expectancy Violation Theory posits that relational satisfaction is influenced when behaviours diverge from normative expectations. In marriage, phone distractions during meaningful interactions may violate expectations of attention and presence, fueling emotional hurt and reduced satisfaction. Emerging research underscores that even silent phone presence can breach couples' expectations of attentiveness.

Affection Exchange Theory (AET)

Flyod (2002) proposed Affection Exchange Theory stresses that affection whether verbal, physical, or symbolic. It is vital for well-being and relational quality. Digital distractions that hinder affection (for example, phubbing) may thus negatively impact relational satisfaction, while intentional affectionate communication via digital channels can strengthen emotional reciprocity. Together, these frameworks help explain how digital behaviours can be double-edged: facilitating warmth under intentional communication, yet damaging relationships through inattentive phone use.

Literature Review: Recent Empirical Insights

Global Perspective on Phubbing and Relationship Quality

Phubbing is recognised as a modern phenomenon with significant relational effects. It introduces the "present-absent paradox", where individuals are physically present but mentally absent due to smartphone use during face-to-face interactions, leading to neglect and emotional harm (Schmidt-Barad & Chernyak-Hai, 2024). Meta-analyses and cohort studies support the detrimental impact of partner phubbing on relationship outcomes. For example, a recent meta-analysis consolidates evidence that phubbing significantly decreases romantic satisfaction and raises conflict, jealousy, and stress.

Namratha and Arulchelvan (2025) found that phubbing diminishes eye contact, emotional intimacy, and could even dampen reproductive

intent in romantic relationships.

Dyadic and Attachment Dynamic

Mosley and Parker (2023) investigated that phubbing has become common and is linked to relationship satisfaction. This study examined 103 heterosexual couples to examine how perceptions of phubbing impact the link between attachment and couple satisfaction. Using an Actor-Partner Interdependence Moderation Model (APIMoM), results showed that both partners' perceptions of phubbing moderated the relationship between anxious and avoidant attachment and their partner's reported satisfaction, highlighting its independent and interdependent effects. Investigations into mediation mechanisms reveal that marital interaction quality and conflict play significant roles. Wang and Zhao (2023) found that increased phubbing leads to diminished marital satisfaction, mediated by disrupted interaction and heightened conflict.

Studies indicate that phubbing fosters loneliness and disrupts empathetic connections. Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas (2016), and Roberts & David (2016) explored that phubbing undermines emotional reciprocity, intensifies exclusion, and erodes life satisfaction

Cultural and Contextual Sensitivities in Pakistan

Within Pakistan, existing studies strongly emphasise phubbing's emotional impact: Working Pakistani women reported increased jealousy and decreased relational closeness when phubbed by their spouses. Men's higher phone usage during shared time appeared especially detrimental to relationship satisfaction.

Arshad & Imran (2023) found that spouse phubbing positively predicted jealousy and negatively foreseen marital satisfaction in a sample of 300 married individuals especially among those with higher education levels. Din et al. (2025) similarly reported lower relationship satisfaction linked to phubbing in educated couples from Muzaffarabad.

Pakistan's collectivist and religious context intensifies these dynamics, as relational roles and expectations are tightly bounded by cultural norms making perceived neglect via phubbing more likely to be interpreted as relational failure or moral breach. The theoretical frameworks

(Hyperpersonal Model, EVT, AET) describe digital intimacy's dual role: enabling emotional closeness through selective, affectionate messaging, but also causing harm when attention is diverted. Global empirical research, including detailed dyadic studies and meta-analyses, confirms phubbing's negative impact on satisfaction, intimacy, and emotional well-being. In Pakistan, cultural nuances further intensify these effects. There is also an increasing focus on intentional digital habits as a way to mitigate these issues.

Methodological Framework

This study adopts a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of married couples navigating digital intimacy within the Pakistani socio-cultural setting. Phenomenology is particularly effective in uncovering the subjective meanings individuals assign to their experiences, providing a detailed understanding of how digital communication influences marital connection, conflict, and emotional expression. Due to the intricate and subtle nature of digital intimacy, where technology, culture, gender roles, and emotional needs converge, qualitative inquiry offers the flexibility and depth needed to examine not only what couples do but also how and why they interpret digital behaviours such as phubbing, affectionate messaging, and shared digital rituals.

Sampling Method

For this study, a purposive sampling method was used to select participants who provide valuable, relevant insights into the research questions. Specifically, the sample includes 20 married individuals chosen to reflect contrasting experiences of digital intimacy. The sampling criteria include:

High Digital Affection / Low Conflict Couples: Those reporting frequent affectionate digital communication and minimal phone-related conflicts, aiming to understand the supportive aspects of digital intimacy.

High Phubbing / High Conflict Couples: Those experiencing significant partner phone distraction and resulting relational strain, to capture challenges and conflicts arising from digital behaviours.

Data Collection

For the data collection participants were recruited from urban centers of Pakistan, including Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad, reflecting the country's major metropolitan areas where smartphone use and digital communication are prevalent. Efforts will be made to balance gender representation, age groups (25–50 years), educational backgrounds, and socioeconomic status to capture diverse perspectives.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The data collection was involved in-depth, semi-structured interviews, conducted individually with each spouse. This method enabled participants to express their perspectives freely without influence from their partner, encouraging honest and detailed responses. Interviews last about 45 to 60 minutes and were held either face-to-face or through secure video conferencing platforms, based on the participant's preference. The interviews were conducted in Urdu and English, according to what makes the participants most comfortable, with the option to switch languages during the interview to ensure genuine expression.

The semi-structured guide was based on the theoretical frameworks (Hyperpersonal Model, Expectancy Violation Theory, Affection Exchange Theory) and existing literature on digital intimacy and marital relations. Key thematic areas are included:

1. Dual Nature of Digital Presence: Connection and Distraction
2. Phubbing as a Relational Breach
3. Digital Affection and Emotional Connection
4. Cultural and Religious Negotiations of Digital Behavior

All interviews were recorded with participant consent and transcribed verbatim. For Urdu interviews, transcripts are translated into English by bilingual researchers, paying careful attention to preserving cultural nuances and idiomatic expressions. Transcripts were checked for accuracy through back-translation and spot checks.

Analysis

Researcher immerse in the data by repeatedly reading transcripts and listening to recordings to gain an overall sense of the material. Using NVivo

qualitative data analysis software, transcripts were systematically coded for meaningful units related to digital intimacy, phubbing, conflict, affection, cultural norms, and emotional responses.

Codes were collated into potential themes that capture patterned meanings across the data.

Themes are reviewed and refined for coherence, internal consistency, and external distinction, ensuring they accurately reflect the dataset and research questions. Clear definitions and labels are given to each theme, describing its core and boundaries. A detailed, interpretative narrative is created linking themes to theoretical frameworks and the Pakistani cultural context, supported by representative quotes.

Reflexivity and Cultural Sensitivity

Reflexivity practices and peer debriefing among researchers minimize subjective bias and enhance objectivity.

The researcher maintains reflexive journals to monitor assumptions, biases, and emotional responses throughout analysis, aiming for a balanced interpretation. Special care is taken to contextualise findings within Pakistani collectivist, religious, and gendered norms, avoiding overgeneralization and respecting participants' worldviews.

To ensure rigour in qualitative inquiry, the study employs the following strategies:

Providing detailed and nuanced descriptions of participants' experiences and socio-cultural contexts helps readers assess relevance to other similar settings. An audit trail records all research decisions, coding frameworks, and analytic memos, enabling external review.

Ethical Consideration

Participant identities were anonymised through pseudonyms and removal of identifying details. Data was securely stored on encrypted devices accessible only to authorised research personnel.

Participants were informed that participation is voluntary and they can withdraw at any point without any consequences. Due to the sensitive nature of topics related to marriage and digital intimacy, interviews were carried out with empathy. Participants were also provided with information about counselling services in case

they experience distress. The interviewer communicated in a culturally sensitive manner, respecting the religious and gender norms common in Pakistani society.

Findings

The thematic analysis of 20 in-depth interviews with married individuals identified with four main themes related to digital intimacy in Pakistani marital relationships: (1) Dual Nature of Digital Presence, (2) Phubbing as a Relational Breach, (3) Digital Affection and Emotional Connection, and (4) Cultural and Religious Negotiations of Digital Behaviour. Each theme illustrates participants' nuanced experiences of how smartphones and digital communication influence intimacy and conflict.

1. Dual Nature of Digital Presence: Connection and Distraction

Participants commonly described digital devices as both facilitating closeness and creating emotional distance. On one hand, phones enabled affectionate communication through texts, voice notes, and sharing photos, which many couples saw as vital for maintaining emotional connection, especially during busy days or physical separation.

"When my husband sends me good morning messages or voice notes, I feel loved even if we are apart," explained one female participant from Lahore.

Conversely, the same devices frequently served as sources of distraction during shared couple time, leading to feelings of neglect.

"Sometimes, when he looks at his phone during dinner, I feel like I'm talking to a wall," said a participant from Karachi.

This duality aligns with Walther's (2007) Hyperpersonal Model, illustrating how computer-mediated communication can enhance intimacy but also contribute to feelings of absence when attention is diverted.

2. Phubbing as a Relational Breach

Phubbing became a significant cause of conflict and emotional pain. Many participants reported feeling ignored, jealous, or undervalued when their partners prioritised phones over face-to-face interaction. Eight out of ten male respondents

said:

"When she scrolls endlessly during our time together, I feel invisible."

Such behaviours were frequently interpreted as breaches of expected attentiveness, confirming Burgoon's (1993) Expectancy Violation Theory. Silent phone presence was as distressing as overt phone use, often sparking arguments and long-term dissatisfaction.

Participants also associated phubbing with jealousy and mistrust, sometimes worsened by social media interactions. Six out of ten females remarked:

"I worry if he is talking to someone else when he hides his phone,"

3. Digital Affection and Emotional Connection

Affection Exchange Theory was reflected in couples' appreciation for deliberate, affectionate digital gestures. Participants valued thoughtful timing of messages, sharing of personal photos, and emojis as symbolic acts reinforcing emotional reciprocity (Floyd, 2002).one participant said:

"My wife's cute texts during the day remind me she cares"

These rituals helped couples feel connected and emotionally supported, especially when physical proximity was limited by work or family obligations.

4. Cultural and Religious Negotiations of Digital Behaviour

Participants emphasized the strong influence of Pakistani collectivist values and Islamic teachings on how digital intimacy is enacted and interpreted. Religious expectations of marital roles and moral conduct heightened the emotional impact of perceived neglect or digital infidelity. One of the male participants said:

"In our culture, ignoring your spouse for the phone is disrespectful, almost like breaking a promise,"

Couples described negotiating boundaries on phone use to align with cultural norms emphasising attentiveness and respect, sometimes avoiding public displays of digital affection due to privacy concerns.

Discussion

The results give a clear picture of the reformative and ambivalent nature of digital intimacy in modern Pakistani marriage. The two-sidedness of digital presence validates earlier foreign studies (Goswami et al., 2025; Garrido, 2024), where smartphones are connection instruments and conflict flashpoints, at the same time.

Phubbing as a relational breach is especially significant in the Pakistani context, where attentiveness and physical presence are culturally charged expectations (Arshad & Imran, 2023). The distress caused by phone distractions aligns with Expectancy Violation Theory's prediction that deviations from normative attention expectations lead to relational dissatisfaction. At the same time, the positive role of digital affectionate communication supports the Hyperpersonal Model's view that mediated interaction can foster intimacy through selective self-presentation and idealised perceptions (Walther, 2006). Essentially, digital affectionate communication aligns with the Hyperpersonal Model by creating an environment where idealised perceptions and selective self-presentation combine to enhance intimacy and relational satisfaction in mediated interactions (Walther and Whitty, 2021; Walther et al., 2011; Anderson and Emmers-Sommer, 2006). Participants' accounts show that thoughtful digital gestures carry symbolic meaning and reinforce emotional bonds, resonating with Affection Exchange Theory's emphasis on affection as essential to relational health (Horan & Butterfield, 2010).

Importantly, the findings highlight the cultural and religious frameworks shaping these dynamics. In Pakistan's collectivist and religious environment, phone use is not just a personal habit but a relational and moral act with consequences for marital honour and trust. This cultural perspective heightens the emotional significance of phubbing and digital communication practices, as shown by local research.

Furthermore, couples' negotiation of phone use boundaries and digital rituals reflects an adaptive response to the challenges posed by smartphones, echoing calls for mindful phone use and behavioural interventions advocated in the literature (Beukeboom & Pollmann, 2021).

Conclusion

This qualitative study explores the deep insights of how digital intimacy affects marital life in Pakistan by exploring the intricate connections between marital relationships, conflict, and culture. It demonstrates that while digital communication has the potential to enhance marital affection and emotional support. It also introduces risks of relational damage when phone use breaches expectations of presence and respect. The study offered an in-depth, culturally grounded perspective on how digital intimacy is experienced, negotiated, and challenged within Pakistani marriages. By incorporating participants' voices and analysing their narratives through established theoretical frameworks, it sheds light on the intricate interaction between digital technology, emotion, and cultural norms in shaping modern marital relationships.

The results indicate the need to develop culturally sensitive couple interventions that encourage the development of purposeful digital behaviours, empathy, awareness, and communication regarding phone use. It is significant to identify the cultural and religious situational context prior to such strategies to make suitable adjustments to lived realities of Pakistani couples. It is important to know the sociological implications of digital technology on intimate relationships in a highly digitizing world. This paper contributes a valuable addition in the study of Pakistani couples within the larger context of a global discourse on technology, culture including sentiments.

Recommendations

The researcher would like to suggest the following aspects

- Findings underscore the need for culturally sensitive couple interventions promoting intentional forsaking digital habits, emphasizing empathy, attentiveness, and limit on phone use.
- Future research should explore rural and less-educated populations on their usage of digital mediums affecting their intimacy and social bonds.
- The construct would highlight the effects of using digital mediums/social media on the different strata of Pakistan's social canvas.

- Setting device-free periods, practicing phone mindfulness, and improving communication around phone use are recommended strategies to preserve relational warmth

Longitudinal and dyadic designs could also illuminate evolving trajectories of digital intimacy over time.

Conflict of Interest

The authors showed no conflict of interest.

Funding

Funding

The authors did not mention any funding for this research.

References

- Arshad, A., & Imran, H. (2023). Partner phubbing, romantic jealousy and marital satisfaction among married individuals. *Applied Psychology Review, 1*(2).
- Beukeboom, C. J., & Pollmann, M. (2021). Partner phubbing: Why using your phone during interactions with your partner can be detrimental for your relationship. *Computers in Human Behavior, 124*, 106932.
- Burgoon, J. K. (1993). Interpersonal expectations, expectancy violations, and emotional communication. *Journal of language and social psychology, 12*(1-2), 30-48.
- De Freitas, J., Oğuz-Uğuralp, Z., Uğuralp, A. K., & Puntoni, S. (2025). AI companions reduce loneliness. *Journal of Consumer Research, ucaf040*.
- Din, S. M. M. U., Gillani, S. A., Tariq, A., & Tariq, J. (2025). Impact of Phubbing Behavior on Relationship Satisfaction Among Married Couples. *Policy Research Journal, 3*(1), 322-329.
- Floyd, K. (2002). Human affection exchange: V. Attributes of the highly affectionate. *Communication Quarterly, 50*(2), 135-152.
- Garrido, E. C., Delgado, S. C., & Esteban, P. G. (2024). Phubbing and its impact on the individual's psychological well-being. *Acta Psychologica, 248*, 104388.
- Goswami, S., Borah, P., & Das, K. (2025). Phubbing and its Impact on Social Life: A Systematic Review. *Authorea Preprints*.
- Horan, S. M., & Booth-Butterfield, M. (2010). Investing in affection: An investigation of affection exchange theory and relational qualities. *Communication Quarterly, 58*(4), 394-413.
- Khodabakhsh, S., & Le Ong, Y. (2021). The impact of partner phubbing on marital quality among married couples in Malaysia: Moderating effect of gender and age. *Aloma: Revista de Psicologia, Ciències de l'Educació i de l'Esport, 39*(1), 9-16.
- Mosley, M. A., & Parker, M. L. (2023). The phubbing problem: A dyadic exploration of the moderating role of partner phubbing on attachment and couple satisfaction. *Computers in Human Behavior, 149*, 107953.
- Namratha, S., & Arulchelvan, S. (2025). Phubbing and human reproduction: The silent saboteur of intimacy and evolution. *African Journal of Reproductive Health, 29*(7).
- Ni, N., Ahrari, S., Zaremohzzabieh, Z., Zarean, M., & Roslan, S. (2025). A meta-analytic study of partner phubbing and its antecedents and consequences. *Frontiers in Psychology, 16*, 1561159.
- Schmidt-Barad, T., & Chernyak-Hai, L. (2024). Phubbing makes the heart grow callous: effects of phubbing on pro-social behavioral intentions, empathy and self-control. *Psychological Reports, 00332941241284917*.
- Size, A. M. R. M. (2025). *Industry Report 2030*.
- Ventura, A., Starke, C., Righetti, F., & Köbis, N. (2025). Relationships in the Age of AI: A Review on the Opportunities and Risks of Synthetic Relationships to Reduce Loneliness.
- Verma, S., Kumar, R., Yadav, S. K., & Devi, R. (2019). The determinants of phubbing behaviour: a millennials perspective. *International Journal of Innovative Technology and Exploring Engineering (IJITEE), 8*(125), 806-812.
- Walther, J. B. (2007). Selective self-presentation in computer-mediated communication: Hyperpersonal dimensions of technology, language, and cognition. *Computers in human behavior, 23*(5), 2538-2557.
- Walther, J. B., & Whitty, M. T. (2021). Language, Psychology, and New Media: The hyperpersonal model

of mediated communication at twenty-five years. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 40(1), 120-135.

Wang, X., & Zhao, K. (2023). Partner phubbing and marital satisfaction: The mediating roles of marital interaction and marital conflict. *Social Science Computer Review*, 41(4), 1126-1139.

Wiederhold, B. K. (2024). The rise of AI companions and the quest for authentic connection. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 27(8), 524-526.

Zhang, Y., Zhao, D., Hancock, J. T., Kraut, R., & Yang, D. (2025). The Rise of AI Companions: How Human-Chatbot Relationships Influence Well-Being. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2506.12605*.