

Phubbing and Romantic Relationships

Strategies of Polish couples of Generation Y to eliminate phubbing behavior

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Master's Thesis

June 2020

ABSTRACT

Since 2012, the term *phubbing* has been used to draw attention to the incorrect use of smartphones in social situations (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018). Phubbing is a social phenomenon associated with the abuse of modern technologies and means ignoring someone in social situations due to playing with a phone or other mobile device (Aagaard, 2019). The term phubbing was created from a combination of the words *telephone* and *snubbing*. Once the phenomenon, which today called phubbing was problematic, was not considered, but over time the negative impact of smartphones on mental health and social relations was noticed. According to research to date, several disorders are associated with phubbing, e.g., smartphone addiction (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016). Phubbing can contribute to depression, malaise, and deterioration of social relations (Ergün et al., 2019). Because of the severe consequences of phubbing, it's worth investigating how you can eliminate phubbing in a relationship. It was noticed that isolation, in this case, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, has similar consequences. The abuse of technological devices during social isolation can be hazardous to mental health. Aagaard (2019) also suggested in his research that possible strategies should be explored to limit the impact of technology on people's lives. So, in this thesis, the question was asked: *What strategies do Polish couples from Generation Y implement to eliminate phubbing behavior in a relationship?* The study participants were respondents belonging to Generation Y (born between 1980 - 1999) because it was noted that this age group is continuously connected to the Internet and uses technological devices in an excellent way (Sieńkowska, 2009). A qualitative research method was used because there are quantitative studies on phubbing, while there are still a few qualitative ones (Garris, 2020). Thirteen in-depth interviews were conducted and analyzed. In this thesis, strategies have been selected to help eliminate phubbing in a relationship. During the interviews, the respondents expressed their opinion on the effectiveness of implemented strategies. It was shown that respondents, during lockdown surprised by the new world situation, implemented a new strategy leveling phubbing. The analysis indicates that creating a working day routine is necessary to separate private and professional life and not expose the partner to phubbing. Before isolation, couples also implemented various anti-phubbing strategies. Installing monitoring applications that limit access and use of the phone turned out to be ineffective for all respondents.

KEYWORDS: *Phubbing, strategies, generation Y, romantic relationship, polish couples*

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1.Introduction

Technology dominates many areas of our lives, facilitates work, allows us to make things, and discoveries that once were only in the sphere of dreams or seemed impossible. One of the findings

whose development we could follow is a smartphone. Smartphones have revolutionized the way people communicate with each other (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018). Every year new phones, computers, and tablets appear, each of which is more modern than the previous one. The same happens with applications and programs that give us countless opportunities to communicate. However, what connects us with people who are far away from us, repels us from those who are close to us (Geser, 2004). Technology is present in our love life, and it can affect it both positively and negatively (Campbell & Muray, 2015).

1.1 Problems related to technology

The first mobile phones were a real revolution. In 2019, it was reported that 67% of people worldwide use a mobile phone, and 42% have access to social media (Ergün et al., 2019). Due to the increasing number of smartphone users, new technology problems have been noticed. As mentioned above, technology can harm romantic relationships, and problems with cell phones often lead to conflicts between romantic partners (Miller-Ott and Kelly, 2015). As the world changes, new terms appear to identify new issues and problems. One of the new terms describing technology's issues is "phubbing, " which will be one of the main topics of this thesis.

Phubbing is a social phenomenon associated with the abuse of modern technologies and means ignoring someone in social situations due to playing with a phone or other mobile device (Aagaard, 2019). This phenomenon has been functioning since 2012, so many issues related to phubbing are not yet investigated (Aagaard, 2019). The aspect of phubbing is still under investigation while existing studies prove that it is a real problem that affects romantic and family relationships. In the Pew (2014) research report, 42% of married people and people in close romantic relationships said their partner was distracted by a smartphone while spending time together (Lenhart & Duggan, 2014). In 2016, research showed that 55% of respondents feel ignored by their partner twice a day (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016). In a 2018 Pew study report, 72% of parents said their children were distracted by mobile phone at least several times while talking to them, but 51% of teenagers say their parents are sometimes distracted by phone during a conversation (Jiang, 2018). Research from 2012 has shown that smartphone users acquire and develop the habit of checking dynamic content available on mobile phones. This is a quick and repetitive control of the material that often leads to opening new pages or applications (Oulasvirta et al., 2012).

Due to the increasing amount of time spent using smartphones, researchers became interested in this topic. Spending a lot of time on the Internet and excessive use of smartphones can lead to mental disorders and difficulties related to social life (Ergün et al., 2019). Studies show that misuse of smartphones leads to psychopathological ailments, such as increasing depression, low self-esteem, and chronic stress (Elhai, Dvorak, et al., 2017). For many people, a smartphone is the first thing they reach for in the morning after waking up, and at the same time, the last thing they pay attention to before falling asleep (Cisco, 2014). People use smartphones when meeting friends and

while driving (Smith, 2015). Studies show that several disorders are associated with phubbing. Smartphone addiction is an essential disorder noted for researchers (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016). The smartphone itself is a very attractive device because it is very readily available; we always have it with us. Studies show that telephones also contribute to many accidents because people do not pay enough attention to the road (Karadağ et al., 2016). Research shows that around 75% of drivers use a telephone while driving (Pinchot et al., 2011). Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas (2016) also noticed that internet addiction is associated with smartphone addiction and is also associated with phubbing. While we use the internet excessively, the phone's usage time also increases (Karadağ et al., 2016). Researchers say that the misuse of smartphones is closely related to the ability to use the internet quickly and can have similar consequences (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016). Excessive use of the internet leads to loneliness, social isolation, and depression (Garris, 2020).

1.2 Similar effects of phubbing and isolation

The problem of phubbing is a very topical issue, so it's worth investigating how people in relationships are trying to fight this phenomenon. Research from 2015 shows that young people have attempted not to use Facebook, but their strategy has failed (Baumer et al., 2015). For this reason, the current study presents an assessment of the strategies that couples implement into life to reduce phubbing in a relationship. This will give a clear picture of the effectiveness of the implemented policies. Qualitative research, i.e., in-depth interviews, will help understand the point of view of couples from generation Y, their motivation, and ways to combat the problem of phubbing in a relationship. The data presented above shows how quickly the world, people, and approach to technology are changing. The study concerned the age group belonging to generation Y. One of the features connecting all representatives of generation Y, also known as the millennium generation, is proficiency in using digital technology. Generally, it is assumed that generation Y is a generation of people born from the 1980s to the early 1990s. However, in Poland, the time frame of this generation is more comprehensive - it extends from the 1980s to the end of the 1990s (Sieńkowska, 2009).

This study also refers to a new situation that prevails in the world. It has been reported that the Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on romantic relationships and drastically affected being together and daily activities (Brooks et al., 2020). In response to the unique global situation, new rules have been introduced. Isolation and social distance have impacted the economic and social conditions around the world (United Nations, 2020). As researchers Neff and Karney (2004) point out, maintaining relationships at a satisfactory and high level during increased stress is very difficult. Certain groups of people are particularly vulnerable to stress overload associated with the consequences of an epidemic, and as a result, develop symptoms of depression or generalized anxiety (Gambin et al., 2020). A COVID-19 pandemic can cause different partner behaviors, such as increased phubbing behavior because this is a new situation and generates a lot of stress. Since

excessive use of smartphones explains the desire to reduce negative emotions (Al-Saggaf & O'Donnell, 2019), phubbing can increase during isolation, which is a source of negative emotions and stress. A pandemic on romantic relationships can be confirmed by the fact that after a forced separation, an increased number of divorces were recorded in China. In this place, the pandemic began (Deese, 2020). Epidemic and the threat it brings have forced people to change their everyday lives. Couples living together had to separate, e.g., due to the work of one of the partners or the opposite, spend time at home all the time because of isolation. Considering the above information, the purpose of these tests is to check:

RQ: What strategies do Polish couples from Generation Y implement to eliminate phubbing behavior in a relationship?

SQ1: What effect on isolation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic had on relationship phubbing?

SQ2: How do couples evaluate the effectiveness of strategies implemented in life to eliminate phubbing?

Most Poles have recently rated their mood negatively - 54% indicated that they felt bad or not very good. Young people aged 25-34 suffered the worst isolation. The need to sit at home increased people's nervousness and fear. Many respondents also complained of boredom and loneliness (Gambin et al., 2020).

1.3 Scientific relevance

The scientific significance of this thesis relates to the research topic and methodology. Since evidence is emerging about the negative impact of smartphones on people's lives (Campbell & Muray, 2015; Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016; Weinstein & Przybylski, 2012), the literature must be supplemented with research on the possibilities of eliminating these influences. For five years of study (between 2005 and 2010), Oulasvirta researchers and other authors did not consider what we now call phubbing as problematic. Telephone users did not perceive using a mobile phone for entertainment or in boredom as a problem. However, the situation has changed in recent years. For many people, compulsive use of the phone has become a problem and a challenge and even began to question whether the use of telephones in some situations is conscious (Aagaard, 2019).

Technology often makes life more comfortable, but it highlights previously unnoticeable problems (Karadağ et al., 2016). There are various studies on phubbing, but they relate to the causes, effects, or phubbing itself (e.g., Weinstein, 2010; Dwyer et al., 2018; Nakamura, 2015). There are less knowledge and qualitative research on ways to eliminate phubbing. The study on phubbing was based mainly on the quantitative method and did not focus on units, which is confirmed by Garris's research (2020). Quantitative analysis has given a solid theoretical basis for phubbing, while a qualitative research method will allow us to know the full and personal experiences of study participants. As already mentioned, many other studies focused on the causes and effects of

phubbing. Still, there are no studies on how to limit smartphones' use, as suggested by Aagaard (2019).

Since the phenomenon of phubbing has become problematic for people over the years, it is worth examining what they do and how they try to prevent phubbing. Conducting qualitative research with Generation Y representatives will complement the literature on phubbing among Millennials by providing information on reducing the impact of technology on the lives of young people. Millennials use phones and other mobile devices in an advanced way of research to open the approach to researching the elimination of phubbing in different spheres of life, not just romantic relationships. Familiarization with assessing the respondents on the effectiveness of implemented strategies will help supplement knowledge on this topic. Previous studies have shown an attempt to limit the use of a social networking site, but it did not bring the intended effects (Baumer et al., 2015).

For the Covid-19 pandemic, this study will provide information on phubbing during social isolation. Previous studies suggest that couples who experience isolation from society, feel lonely, and experience a lot of stress are exposed to loss of relationship satisfaction and arguments in a relationship (Story & Bradbury, 2004). It is essential to scientifically investigate how to deal with phubbing during a crisis because, as mentioned earlier, isolation and phubbing can have similar effects that significantly affect mental health.

1.4 Social relevance

Conducting qualitative research into the possibilities of eliminating phubbing can help people in romantic relationships and therapists who will help people with these types of problems in the future. The topic is socially important because it combines technological and psychological issues and concerns a large part of society (Ergün et al., 2019). More than 85% of people from Generation Y own a smartphone (Nielsen, 2014), so it is important to make young people aware of what phubbing is, what effects it can have, and how to deal with it.

As demonstrated in previous studies (Ergün et al., 2019; Elhai, Dvorak, et al., 2017), phubbing can cause mental disorders, depression can lead to isolation from society and intensify indifference to others. People need to be aware of the consequences of smartphone abuse. Along with technological progress, interpersonal communication has changed. Individuals prefer to communicate with each other via mobile devices and the Internet, rather than traditional conversations. This phenomenon mainly affects millennials and is influenced by addiction to smartphones or a lack of self-control (Afdal et al., 2019). The level of use of electronic media in everyday life has become for this generation a specific determinant of belonging and even lifestyle. It has a significant impact on many aspects, including interpersonal relationships, the professed system of values, professional activity, interests, and consumer behavior of this generation (Kuczamer-

Kłopotowska, 2016). It is, therefore, likely that couples from Generation Y will exhibit phubbing behavior.

People in this age group are more often looking for lasting, significant romantic relationships, but at the same time, they encounter numerous obstacles in their union life. Social norms have been lost in terms of dates, there is a growing reluctance to compromise and narcissism, and these are the characteristics of generation Y (Hudson, 2015; Reiner, 2014). Generation Y is defined as a generation that is continuously connected to the Internet because it has entered the era of the ubiquitous use of technology (Bull, 2010). Unlike the Z generation, for which technology is a natural part of life (Gardasevic, 2015), the Y generation may try to fight phubbing behaviors because technological gadgets have not always been present in their lives (Bull, 2010). During coronavirus isolation, it is likely that couples decided to implement strategies to eliminate phubbing because it became a visible problem for them then. It is also expected that the restrictions and changes introduced during the pandemic have highlighted the hitherto unknown causes of phubbing. This work can help couples who have problems related to phubbing and do not know how to deal with it. Justification of the effectiveness of strategies proposed by couples to eliminate phubbing can be helpful for other couples and be an inspiration for changes in romantic life.

1.5 Outline

This thesis contains five chapters and has the following structure: the second chapter discusses the theoretical foundations necessary to conduct the study, starting from the discussion of previously done research on phubbing and presenting the definition of the discussed issue. Next, the connections between phubbing and Generation Y, which are considered, phubbing in romantic relationships, and similar consequences of phubbing and social isolation are discussed. The third chapter focused on research methodology. The legitimacy of using the qualitative research method was presented. The purpose of collecting and analysing thematic data and the topic of validity and reliability of research were discussed. The fourth chapter presents the results of the study. Four separate issues were discussed in detail: feelings related to phubbing, phubbing during isolation caused by a pandemic, strategies to help eliminate phubbing in a relationship, and the effectiveness of implemented strategies. Each area has been discussed in detail and divided into sub-topics. Chapter five contains a summary of the research carried out, the answer to the research question and sub questions posed in this thesis. A discussion on this thesis, research limitations, and possible directions for future research was also presented. Appendix A contains a list of respondents who took part in the survey, while Appendix B contains a list of topics covered during the interviews used in this study.

2. Literature review and theoretical framework

This chapter will briefly discuss the research on phubbing and romantic relationships to understand this topic better. They are mainly focusing on the relationship between phubbing and romantic

relationships as well as phubbing and generation Y. The relationship between phubbing and isolation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic will also be discussed. Because phubbing has negative consequences (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016) and social isolation (Gambin et al., 2020), it is essential to explain how these two issues are interconnected. The theoretical concepts contained in the research question and the characteristics of the terms associated with these concepts will be described below.

It may seem that technological gadgets can lead us, question our willpower, and force us to act contrary to our intentions (Aagaard, 2019). As previous studies on students show, young people often face habitual distractions (Aagaard, 2015). After opening the computer, students automatically access insignificant websites and are dispersed (Baumer et al., 2015). It was emphasized that surrendering to technology's distraction is easy because it does not depend on the students' conscious will (Aagaard, 2015). Aagaard's research (2019) notes that when students open their computers, they only press the first letter of a popular social networking site to get to the site. Automatic login simplifies and promotes the moment of distraction. Other studies have shown that students who took part in the 99-day challenge without Facebook have previously returned to using a social networking site. Study participants noted that for the first ten days, their fingers were automatically directed to the keys suitable for logging in to Facebook (Baumer et al., 2015). What can we do to avoid bad technological habits? Unfortunately, willpower is not enough for bad technical habits to cease to dominate in our lives, as confirmed by Dewey's research (2007). Getting rid of habits is difficult because it is too late to realize some of the actions. If the behavior is associated with a pattern, this activity is often not controlled (Aagaard, 2019).

Aagaard's previous research (2015) showed that an obstacle should be put up reminding to monitor your behavior consciously. In the case of laptops, blocking this page in the browser or blocking the entire browser and closing the computer may hinder the continual checking of Facebook (Aagaard, 2015). There are also special computer programs that prevent user distraction (Aagaard, 2019). Dotson also mentions in his research that computer programs block access to Wi-Fi to avoid distraction. To reaccess the Internet, the user must restart the computer (Dotson, 2012). Considering previous data and research, it seems that mobile devices have a significant impact on willpower and may force us to act in a manner inconsistent with our values (Aagaard, 2019). Aagaard suggests further research into strategies that young people use to not succumb to technological habits (Aagaard, 2019). The author of this study decided to examine strategies for eliminating phubbing behaviors, i.e., the abuse of smartphones, and narrow research to phubbing in romantic relationships. A review of the literature and familiarization with existing research helps sort out theoretical issues (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). The next part of this thesis will describe research related to phubbing and the impact of technology on interpersonal relationships and romantic relationships.

2.1 Phubbing research

The development of communication media in the millennium era was the beginning of changes in society. Social change is characterized by changing patterns or forms of interaction in interpersonal and social relationships (Afdal et al., 2019). The shift in communication is associated with the emergence of new media and communication devices, e.g., smartphones, to facilitate and improve communication. The phenomenon associated with the unfavourable use of smartphones is called phubbing. The event of phubbing occurs when a person rejects interpersonal relationships in favor of a mobile phone (Karadağ et al., 2015). To better understand the term phubbing, you need to look at the word itself. The term phubbing was created from a combination of the phrase 'the telephone' and 'snubbing' and was invented in 2012 by the Macquarie Dictionary to highlight the growing problem of misuse of mobile phones in social situations (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018). Phubbing can be defined as ignoring or underestimating a person or our environment because we focus all our attention on a mobile device (Cizmeci, 2017). Whitney Boesel (2013) noted in her research that there is a clear motive for dominance in phubbing. A person who practices phubbing expects someone to pay attention to her and celebrate the moment when she meets with resistance and disagreement with this behavior (Whitney Erin Boesel, 2013).

Phubbing contributes to distance from people and the surrounding reality. Instead, people with this problem pay more attention to virtual reality (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018). Researchers emphasize that people ignored by the partner who pays more attention to the phone feel disregarded, and this means a lack of basic respect (T'ng, Ho & Low, 2018). Phubbing applies to people who cannot part with the phone. Phubbing, i.e., continuous use of a smartphone in the presence of another person, maybe the basis for harming that person (T'ng, Ho & Low, 2018). Research from 2016 showed that every interpersonal relationship is exposed to technology interference (McDaniel & Coyne, 2016, p. 85). A study from 2018 has been demonstrated that phubbing is also present in family relationships. During the study, parents reported that they felt underappreciated and ignored by their children and were surprised by the amount of time their child spends with the phone during family meetings (Kadylak et al., 2018). In the business sphere, phubbing can also be dangerous. Even if the phone's use is done in informal situations, it can be seen as disrespect to colleagues. Phubbing at work may decrease trust between employees or affect the relationship between the employer and subordinates (Roberts & David, 2017).

Researchers have noticed that there is a connection between phubbing and excessive internet and smartphone use. Still, because the research is correlative, it has not been established whether these disorders cause phubbing (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018). However, other researchers mention smartphone addiction, Internet addiction, social media addiction, and games as a cause of phubbing (Karadağ et al., 2015a). It has been noticed that modern society prefers to undertake various activities and activities using technological devices on its own, rather than social relations. And be somewhat dependent on other people (Afdal et al., 2019). Behavior that is not conducive to

interpersonal relationships has also been linked to phubbing. When a person sees another person using a smartphone, he even begins to play with his phone to avoid social interaction (Karadağ et al., 2015). They were using a smartphone while in a room with other people or family at home has become widely accepted. The norm has become that being in places where interpersonal relations should be the most important thing, the telephone is always present. At meetings with friends or family, it is noticeable that people are reluctant to check social media or read messages in the company (Afdal et al., 2019).

Phubber is closely related to phubbing. This is a person who performs phubbing (David & Roberts, 2017). Phubber ignores his partner or doesn't socialize, because he devotes most of his attention to the smartphone. It has been noticed that studies from 2010 show that a phone user reaches for his smartphone on average 110 times a day (Woollaston, 2013). Research in 2014 noted that phubber reaches for his phone on average 221 times a day, even if it does not ring or make notification sounds (Tecmark, 2014). This significant difference emphasizes that the problem of phubbing is growing and changing dynamically. This may be closely related to smartphone and Internet addiction, as reported by Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas (2016). Phubbing can be a big problem in everyday life. Such behavior is inconsistent with the values of mutual respect and culture of communication that society recognizes (Afdal et al., 2019).

The term *phubbee* is associated with the phenomenon of phubbing. Phubbee is a person who experiences the behavior of a phubbing partner (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018). Phubbed is an integral element of the relationship with a person who abuses a smartphone or is addicted to the Internet. It is also often the case that people who experience phubbing by a partner begin to practice phubbing themselves (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018). A person who is ignored by his partner on the smartphone may experience unpleasant consequences, e.g., such people are less satisfied with their interpersonal contacts and do not feel a strong bond with the partner (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018; Krasnova et al., 2016).

Przybylski and Weinstein (2012) conducted experiments on study participants to check whether the mere presence during a conversation reduces its quality and proximity to partners. The results prove that the presence of the phone reduced the closeness of the partners after the discussion and negatively affected the quality of the conversation. The presence of a telephone also manipulated the second experiment. The results showed that the conversation's quality was reduced only when the interview was significant (Weinstein and Przybylski, 2012). Researchers Miller-Ott and Kelly (2015) conducted a study where they proved that on dates, the partners expect the meeting not to be disturbed by a mobile phone. The study also showed that partners expect attention during an intimate stay at home (Miller-Ott & Kelly, 2015). Respondents indicated that telephones should be turned off in the evening and early morning (Miller-Ott and Kelly, 2015). Behavior associated with phubbing is becoming increasingly common and socially acceptable (Aagaard, 2019).

In Poland, literature researching phubbing and its impact on interpersonal and romantic relationships are developing slowly (Kuczamer-Kłopotowska, 2016). Data are available to confirm that a large proportion of the population uses the Internet and smartphones. So much research can be socially essential and give directions to other researchers for future research. Studies have also shown that phubbing is associated with many adverse effects on interpersonal relationships. Phubbing negatively affects communication quality (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas 2018), reducing satisfaction with relationships (Roberts and David 2016). Qualitative research conducted in 2016 showed that people who exhibit phubbing behaviors signal apathy symptoms. Their response, such as lack of eye contact, delayed reactions, and mechanical intonation, discourage further conversation (Aagaard, 2016; Afdal et al., 2019). Other empirical studies have shown that phubbee, i.e., people ignored by a partner, reciprocate by creating a vicious circle (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas 2016). In empirical research, the researcher checked the attitude of young people to phubbing. It was noticed that young people have a more liberal approach to the use of technology than parents of people participating in the study (Aagaard, 2019). As the following data shows, the scale of behavior related to phubbing is continually growing, so it is essential to broaden knowledge on how to deal with the excessive use of new technologies that cause phubbing.

According to the research of the Central Statistical Office of 2019, it seems that the smartphone is undoubtedly the dominant device on which Poles connect to the Internet. Almost 90% of people aged 16-24 use the Internet on a smartphone while on a laptop and notebook - less than 30%. Smartphones also dominate among people aged 16-74 - almost 50%. In each age group, the smartphone is the dominant tool for using the Internet in Poland. In 2010, 63% of households had access to broadband Internet. In 2018, 84% of households with at least one aged 16-74 had access to high-speed Internet (www.stat.gov.pl). The presented data suggest that phubbing may appear in the romantic accounts of Poles from generation Y because smartphones are present in their lives to a large extent. The next section describes the relationship between phubbing and romantic relationships, which are the main themes of this thesis.

2.2 Phubbing and romantic relationship

By allowing technology to be an integral part of everyday life, smartphones are present in most interpersonal relationships, including romantic relationships (Krasnova et al., 2016). Previous studies on phubbing and romantic relationships have highlighted negative consequences for the link and both partners. Relationship deterioration, loneliness and rejection, and lower satisfaction with the contact have been reported (e.g., Roberts & David, 2016; McDaniel & Coyne, 2016). Researchers believe that experiencing phubbing leads to jealousy, which can negatively affect coherence in a romantic relationship (Krasnova et al., 2016).

The Przybylski and Weinstein (2012) experiment showed that the telephone's presence could interfere with interpersonal relationships. It has been noticed that phubbing also affects romantic

relationships. As researchers, Roberts and David (2016) indicate, the phone's presence means that the partners do not feel connected. Ordinary time disturbed by cell phones can lead to reduced satisfaction with the relationship and the romantic partner. For a relationship to be satisfactory for partners, both partners must feel their presence and commitment. It is not enough to be in a partner's environment, and there must be a relationship, a connection between partners (Roberts and David, 2016). When a relationship senses the absence of a partner, they may feel threatened and feel less satisfaction from the link (Roberts and David, 2016). McDaniel and Coyne (2014) point out that when one partner allows the phone to interfere with the time spent together, the priorities of the person may be unclear to the partner and may feel overlooked. In partner relations, phubbing can have unpleasant consequences. Using the phone at the wrong time can reduce relationship satisfaction and increase loneliness (Ergün et al., 2019). Ignoring a romantic partner for checking or replying on social media sends a message that the content on the phone is more exciting and essential than interacting with the partner (Roberts & David, 2016). Researchers Leggett and Rossouw (2014) believe that attention is a crucial aspect in healthy relationships and emphasize that presence is a process in which we remain focused and open to a partner, and nothing outside distracts us (Leggett & Rossouw, 2014). Qualitative phubbing research had shown that notably, Generation Y respondents reported a lot of negative emotions related to jealousy when their partner phubbed. Study participants reported their partner's anger, sadness, and loss of attention as phubbing (Krasnova et al., 2016). The same researchers believe that the smartphone disconnects the partners, disrupts the romantic relationship, hinders emotional ties, and can cause partners' jealousy.

The displacement hypothesis is mentioned in many sources. According to this theory, time spent on cell phones can eliminate or limit important and significant interactions with romantic partners, which can seriously affect satisfaction and relationship satisfaction (Wang et al., 2017; Coyne et al., 2014; Valkenburg & Peter, 2007). The theory and research presented above clearly prove that using a telephone in the presence of a romantic partner harms romantic relationships and negatively affects relationship satisfaction. The answer to the research question posed in this thesis will help avoid the unpleasant consequences of phubbing.

2.3 Phubbing and Generation Y

It is generally accepted that Generation Y is a generation of people born from the 1980s to the early 1990s (Sieńkowska, 2009). In Poland, the time frame of this generation covers the years 1980–1999. The differences in this time frame are since one of the factors shaping generation Y is the experience of capitalism and the spread of new technologies. These experiences did not reach Poles until after the fall of communism in 1989 when two processes overlapped in Poland: economic transformation and the spread of the Internet. Typical experiences for generation Y are belated Poles' experiences regarding other countries of Western Europe or the USA (Sieńkowska, 2009). Due to these differences, the study will be conducted with the participation of Polish romantic partners. In Poland,

it is usually assumed that generation Y includes young people born in 1983–1997 (Oleszkowicz & Senejko 2013), and thus at the age of 21–40.

Generation Y representatives most often use smartphones to browse the Internet, listen to music, create multimedia materials (photos, videos), but also to access various social networks (about 40% of millennia) (Report 2014a). Representatives of Generation Y are most often smart and brave. They lack patience, humility, and respect for the hierarchy of services. They are convinced of their value and knowledge, willing to change existing standards. Their advantages are tolerance, openness to other cultures, excellent understanding of the Internet and new communication technologies, independence and ambition, divisibility of attention, ability to work in a group, task-oriented approach to work, feisty and courage, performing tasks with passion, constant readiness for development and further education, as well as involvement in jobs that give satisfaction (Rosa, 2013). The most common disadvantages are impatience, lack of communication skills (e.g., with other generations or business communication), excessive expectations, lack of life and professional independence, lack of humbleness and the ability to behave in different situations, claims, the fall of power, perception of the world through the prism of own benefits, convenience, and convenience, quickly get bored with everyone, rejecting criticism (Rosa, 2013). In the literature, Generation Y is also described as optimistic. Some cosmopolitans who will succeed in life without fearing for the future value freedom and independence, individualists who like when the world adapts to them, and vice versa. Material values are not their fundamental value (Sieńkowska, 2009). Generation Y does not focus materially on possession, but rather on later experiences while valuing its convenience. It is also essential to succeed and work in conjunction with a passion that provides financial and, equally important, emotional, and mental satisfaction (Sieńkowska, 2009).

Research conducted in 2018 shows that over 70% of students use a cell phone to listen to music, browse social networks, and watch movies, which is probably the main reason for phubbing behavior in their lives. However, 40% of students said they prefer personal contacts. Researchers believe this is a chance to mitigate the effects of phubbing, but a method or strategy is necessary (Cao, Jiang & Liu, 2018). Therefore, qualitative research illustrating strategies that Generation Y pairs use to eliminate phubbing may be needed. Generation Y is at risk of ignoring partners and ignoring in favor of mobile phones. These people efficiently handle a variety of online tools to search for information, entertainment, education, work, or expressing their own identity. Numerous life transfer areas - entirely or partially - to the Internet: work, study, hobby, shopping, communication, making, and maintaining relationships (Rosa, 2013). Bearing in mind the ability and willingness of Generation Y to use technology in various areas of life, they can look for a solution to phubbing with the help of technology. Possible, expected strategies to combat phubbing may take the form of applications and other technology-related restrictions (Hill, 2015). Expanding research into the effectiveness of strategies to eliminate phubbing can also help the electronics industry. If the

Generation Y pairs implement technology-related strategies, this could be valuable for application developers limiting smartphone use.

2.4 Phubbing and lockdown

The COVID-19 pandemic is associated with threats to the health and life of people around the world due to the disease itself and its complications (Anderson et al., 2020). It is also the reason for considerable changes in everyday functioning, many of which can be perceived as unfavourable. These factors may contribute to the intensification of depression and anxiety symptoms in the entire population of a pandemic country, which is confirmed by preliminary studies conducted in Poland (Dragan, 2020) and in the world (e.g., Qiu et al., 2020; Rajkumar, 2020). On the one hand, the increased severity of depression and anxiety symptoms in adult Poles during an epidemic is a natural response to the profound changes, challenges, threats, and uncertainty associated with the epidemic and its consequences (Heitzman, 2020; Huflejt-Łukasik, 2010). On the other hand, in some people, the plague and its personal, social, and economic consequences can lead to increased stress that exceeds the individual's ability to adapt and cope, leading to clinically significant depression and anxiety (Gambin et al., 2020).

In particular, the epidemic can affect those who have to face additional, new, and serious challenges. In this context, mention may be made of employees who were forced to switch to remote work, which could have caused fear of failure in a new situation and a feeling of depression due to mounting challenges, with insufficient resources and competences in the use of new communication technologies (Gambin et al., 2020). The situations listed here necessitate the development of new remedial or defense strategies. In the absence of opportunities or severe difficulties in developing effective coping methods, especially in the lack of social support, emotional overload can occur.

Many studies on phubbing have shown that it can harm the psyche. Researchers believe that phubbing is perceived as a risk of depression and mental health problems (Wang, Xie, et al., 2017). According to studies, people who practice phubbing experience feelings of loneliness (Tan, Pamuk & Donder, 2013), anxiety, and attitudes related to depression (McDaniel & Coyne, 2016). Studies have shown that more significant involvement in mobile technology devices is associated with higher levels of stress and signs of depression (Harwood, Dooley, et al., 2014). Other studies have shown that excessive use of modern technologies, including cell phones, is associated with sleep disorders, depression, and mental well-being (Tao et al., 2017). The introduction to this master's thesis also discusses other studies that prove that phubbing and excessive use of smartphones has an impact on mental health and can significantly contribute to depression, malaise and reduced interpersonal relationships (among others Elhai, Dvorak, et al., 2017; Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016).

The data presented above show that isolation and phubbing can harm mental health. As mentioned, phubbing is associated with depression, as is social isolation. When phubbing is practiced during the lockdown, it can have doubly adverse effects. Strategies that eliminate phubbing in a relationship can contribute to improving well-being during the lockdown and offset the impact of lockdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

3. Methodology

This chapter presents and describes the test method and justification for choosing this method together with how to perform the test. Besides, the section discusses how to collect study participants and analyse respondents and data.

3.1 Research method

To answer the research question, a qualitative research method was used. Research and analysis focus on the subjective shaping of the meaning and relationship between the researcher and the respondent. The opposite is exact for quantitative research, where the data analyzed is objective and can be generalized (Brennen, 2017). In qualitative research, it is essential to recognize that reality is socially constructed, paying particular attention to the language and subjective approach of the individual to the analysed topic (Brennen, 2017). There are two main areas of qualitative research: language and context. Language, both in writing and speech, is used not only for communication but also for building community and social realities (Brennen, 2017). However, focusing on context is necessary to find a sense of ambiguity in respondents' statements, which they express during communication. Since qualitative research is an interpretative process, the context is particularly crucial for qualitative data to fit into reality, i.e., to best relate the researcher's interpretation to various real contexts, e.g., social or economic context (Brennen, 2017).

As mentioned, this study focused on the strategies that couples implement to eliminate phubbing-related behaviors, i.e., ignoring a partner for their cell phone. The answer to the research question must be preceded by the collection and analysis of qualitative data. The data was collected through in-depth interviews. The interview participants were people from Generation Y, aged 25-34, in a romantic relationship. Qualitative research will best help you understand the problem in detail or try to understand the context associated with the problem (Creswell, 2017). It has been noted that qualitative research is also useful as a follow-up to quantitative analysis. Such research helps to incorporate a personal perspective and extend existing findings (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Phubbing is a reasonably new phenomenon, and technology is continually evolving, which is why pair strategies on phubbing and eliminating such behavior can often change and differ from each other. In-depth interviews will allow you to explore what people think, how they work, and live.

As Creswell (2017) points out, a research process that focuses on a qualitative research method will have many different characteristics. Due to the nature of qualitative research, they focus

on the subjective meanings created by study participants. This requires special attention and caution on the part of the researcher because he cannot allow the distortion of these meanings with personal prejudices and his point of view. At any time during the research, the research process may change, making qualitative research flexible (Creswell, 2017). When analysing qualitative data, the researcher creates a holistic description of the study. The process of review characterizes qualitative research analysis from abstract themes to more general ones (Creswell, 2017).

In the present study, the qualitative method will best investigate a problem difficult to quantify. As Creswell (2017) points out, the qualitative method is the best for studying e.g., relationships and interpersonal interactions. Considering the features of qualitative research and the research question of this thesis, which focuses on the participants' personal experiences, the qualitative method will be the most appropriate. In-depth individual interviews will be the best method to answer the research question because they allow you to get new information to understand better the problem being analysed (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Focusing on each interlocutor's meaning and opinion is the primary purpose of this research, not collecting quantitative data that can be generalized.

3.2 Qualitative interviews

The research question suggests that the researcher wants to check what strategies the couple implements in their lives to eliminate or prevent phubbing in romantic relationships. In this case, taking into account and focusing on Polish couples belonging to Generation Y. As mentioned earlier, the research question was formulated: What strategies for Polish couples from Generation Y implement to eliminate behaviors associated with phubbing in a relationship? The most appropriate method was qualitative research, and more specifically, in-depth interviews. The interviews allow learning of the participants' point of view and enable obtaining rich and detailed answers from the respondents (Bryman, 2012). Qualitative research offers various tools for conducting research. One of them is in-depth interviews used in this master's thesis. It was examined what strategies Polish couples from generation Y are implementing to eliminate phubbing from the relationship. Interviews are the best method for this type of research because they relate to the feelings and personal experiences of study participants (Brennen, 2017).

There are various forms of interviews. They can be structured, partly structured, or unstructured. Partially structured interviews were conducted in this master's thesis. As Bryman (2012) points out, somewhat structured interviews are based on an interview guide, they consist of questions and topics that should be included to ensure that the common thread is similar in all interviews conducted. This enables a comparison of responses and data analysis (Bryman, 2012). The ability to make small changes when conducting interviews is an undoubted advantage of semi-structured interviews. It is not necessary to ask questions always in the same order; it is possible to request a supplementary question that allows you to extend any topic (Brennen, 2017). Using a

qualitative, semi-structured research method, the researcher can also analyse the reactions and manner of expression of study participants. Partially structured interviews relate to the content and form of the interview (Matthews & Ross, 2010). When conducting an interview, it may be found that a survey participant suggests that some questions are not entirely understood or cannot answer a question. It is possible to adjust the items to make them more transparent in the next data collection process in-depth interviewing. The partially structured interview also allows you to skip a question if the interviewee has already answered it in earlier statements. Such possibilities make the data more valuable, which contributes to more precise results and termination of research. In the event of significant problems arising during the interview, the semi-structured interview allows you to adjust the study (Bryman, 2012). To answer the research question presented in this master's thesis, topics related to phubbing, technology in everyday life, the impact of technology on romantic relationships, and strategies that enable eliminating the ignore of a partner for a mobile phone dominated.

Partially structured interviews were chosen as the best method of this research due to these interviews' characteristics. Using this method, a new research direction suggested by earlier studies was analysed, but also the personal and subjective perspectives of the study participants were examined. Partially structured interviews have allowed studying part of the broad phenomenon of phubbing. This research method is also entitled to monitor how subjects relate to the analysed problem and analyse the reactions of study participants (Matthews and Ross, 2010). This Master's thesis complements the qualitative research conducted in phubbing, which is much less than quantitative research (Garris, 2020).

3.3 Sampling

One of the concepts that make up the research question in this work is Generation Y. In the literature, many terms are used interchangeably to describe Generation Y, such as Generation Millennium (Millennials), or Generation WHY, Echo Boomers, Generation Net (Tapscott, 2010). Generation Y includes people born in the years 1980–1996 (van den Bergh & Behrer, 2012). Generation Y is currently a vital phenomenon explaining the use of technology. A study conducted in November 2014 on Polish representatives of generation Y showed that over 60% of Millennials use a smartphone. They use the Internet in a completely different way than by representatives of Generation X, who treat available Internet and use it mainly as a helpful tool at work. The possibilities of the Internet and the time spent on it are treated as a source of the bond, entertainment, relaxation, advice, and inspiration (Report 2014a). Generation Y representatives most often use smartphones to browse the Internet, listen to music, create multimedia materials (photos, videos), but also to access various social networks (about 40% of Millennials) (Report 2014a).

The goal of the interviewees was to find people born between 1980 and 1996. Research suggests that close relationships are most important for young adults (Garris, 2020). The study covered people born in the years 1980–1999, assuming a time frame for generation Y in Poland. This

is the group defined in the study as the one with the most common internet connection. For the research to be reliable and the results not biased, the study participants could not be friends or family members of the researcher. Respondents confirmed that they were in a romantic relationship and were observing behavior related to phubbing in their relationship. Study participants voluntarily participated in the study and did not receive payment for participating in the study. In the beginning, each participant was informed about the interview procedure and asked to sign consent for the interview, use the material to analyse and formulate conclusions, and record the conversation.

A sample of this study consisted of 13 interviewees. Study participants were born in the years 1980–1996. The youngest interlocutor was born in 1995, so he was 25 years old, and the oldest interlocutor was 34 years old and was born in 1986. All participants in the study reported having smartphones and were in a romantic relationship during the interview. All interviews were conducted in April and May 2020, which means that the interviews were conducted at short intervals. The data collection process, i.e., in-depth interviews, was done on the Internet due to the worldwide pandemic and government ban on meetings. The duration of the interviews varied. The researcher intended to conduct interviews lasting from 45 to 60 minutes. It turned out that it was enough time to collect data; individual interviews were not in the initial study period. The average interview duration is 51 minutes. As emphasized by Bryman (2012), the length of interviews in qualitative research is more of an intention than a rule. Many changes occur during the interview that may affect the duration of the respondent's statements.

People who participated in the interviews were found through personal posts on the researcher's social media. Initially, a targeted sampling strategy was used (Bryman, 2012). To obtain reliable results and answer the research question posed, the study participants had to meet the following conditions: (1) be of age Y, (2) be a Polish citizen, and (3) remain in a romantic relationship. Snowball sampling was then used, which means that the first interviewees were asked if they knew other people who could participate in the study. Potential study participants reported to the researcher and then scheduled interviews (Bryman, 2012). These people needed to have internet access to talk online and print the documents required for the conversation.

As a result, 13 detailed interviews were conducted, and all participants met the conditions. The interview participants come from a large city and the surrounding area in central Poland; one person comes from a small town in another province. As all respondents come from Poland, the interviews were conducted in Polish. The essential fragments answering the research question have been translated into English because all the work is written in English. As Polkinghorne (2005) notes, interlocutors feel more comfortable when they can speak their native language. The conversation is then freer, which may result in obtaining more valuable and useful information for analysis and ultimately to the answer to the research question (Polkinghorne, 2005).

Thirteen people, both men, and women, participated in the study. There was a significant gender imbalance; nine women and four men. One of the reasons for the participation of more

women in the study may be that the first respondent was a woman, and snowball sampling caused this disproportion. Five people received a master's degree in various majors; Scandinavian studies, innovation management, human nutrition technology, and four people undergo master's studies. Four people received a bachelor's degree. All respondents work, mainly full-time. A detailed overview of respondents is provided in Table 1 and Appendix A.

Table 1. Respondents' profiles

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Relationship length	Living with a partner
Respondent 1	Female	26	3 years	Yes
Respondent 2	Male	25	6 years	Yes
Respondent 3	Female	25	7 years	No
Respondent 4	Female	27	2 years	Yes
Respondent 5	Female	27	10 years	Yes
Respondent 6	Female	25	4 years	No
Respondent 7	Female	34	1 year	No
Respondent 8	Female	33	6 years	Yes
Respondent 9	Male	25	5 years	No
Respondent 10	Male	25	1 year	Yes
Respondent 11	Female	26	4 years	Yes
Respondent 12	Female	34	11 years	Yes
Respondent 13	Male	25	2 years	Yes

The exceptional world situation has prevented direct interviews. A quiet and comfortable space where the conversation takes place means that the interlocutor is not distracted (Bryman, 2015). To ensure the highest level of comfort for the interlocutor, the interviews took place at the best moment for the participant. Interviews were conducted online, via the Zoom and Skype platforms, depending on the respondent's preferences.

3.4 Data collection

Interviews began with general questions about the relationship, e.g., how long the subject is in a romantic relationship or how the item would describe the relationship with his partner. They were also asked whether the respondent lives permanently with his partner. Then each respondent was asked if he had ever encountered the term phubbing before. Despite the prior familiarization of the subjects with consent forms, it was important for the researcher that every participant in the study understood the analysed concept to the same extent. When each participant of the study was introduced to the term phubbing, they began to examine respondents' relationships with technology.

Besides, during interviews, respondents were asked to describe in what life situations they use a smartphone and how technology affects their daily lives. The respondents were then asked to describe situations in which their partner abuses the phone and cases in which the partner indicates that the respondent uses too many mobile devices. Later the respondents described the feelings and reactions associated with phubbing in a relationship. Respondents cited specific situations in which both they and their partners experienced phubbing and explained the results they encountered at that time.

During the interviews, the topic of the world worldwide pandemic Covid-19 was raised. Subjects were asked how coronavirus isolation affected phubbing in their relationship. Here, various supplementary questions were asked about work, everyday life, and technology use during the lockdown. Particular attention was paid to the topic of strategies that couples implement into life to reduce phubbing in a relationship. Participants were asked if they had ever used such strategies. Supplementary questions regarding specific strategies listed by the respondent also appeared here. Then they were asked if any of the strategies are still valid today. Respondents described their experiences related to strategies levelling phubbing. Interviews ended with a subjective assessment of the strategies mentioned. Respondents described in detail which strategies operated in their relationship and gave the probable reasons why some phubbing-reducing activities are not appropriate for them. It should be noted that the questions were asked to the respondents in a different order depending on the respondents' answers and the direction of the conversation.

3.5 Analysis of data

To answer the research question, the researcher conducted a qualitative study, because previous studies were mainly based on the quantitative method and did not focus on units, which is confirmed by Garris (2020) research. Researchers Miller-Ott and Kelly (2015) point out that qualitative research helps explore this topic and is precious. Due to the small number of respondents, it is impossible to generalize the results, that's why they conducted quantitative research.

For in-depth analysis, all interviews were recorded audio. Recording the interview allowed the researcher to freely conduct the conversation, remaining vigilant, and focused on a specific point of the discussion. The researcher was not distracted, recording everything the interlocutor says and checking when necessary (Bryman, 2012). Each interview was rewritten immediately after conducting and coded to make the analysis less complicated. After transcribing the interviews, they were analysed. Qualitative data coding is an integral element of qualitative data analysis, improving the study's quality and the resulting conclusions. Codes in qualitative research are usually a short word or expression with which the researcher assigns data to data: textual, visual (e.g., Fragment of the respondent's statement). This function corresponds to what the researcher considers to be the essence, the most crucial element, or sense of the encoded part of the material (Saldana, 2009). A particular group of codes is so-called *in vivo* codes, i.e., Text fragments (quotation marks) so

characteristic that they can be used as codes in themselves. In vivo codes allow recipients to bring test results closer to recipients, often bringing out something unobvious and surprising.

Specified what the analyzed data refers to. Excerpts from interviews that describe the same idea in a descriptive or theoretical way have been extracted (Gibbs, 2008). During coding, the subject of interest of the researcher may be e.g., management strategies, feelings, and emotions, consequences, effects (Saldaña, 2009). The coding of interviews helped the researcher find typical features that may occur and identify differences, new problems related to the topic of the study. Saldaña distinguishes in his book (2009) 29 coding methods that differ from each other, including the subject of interest (which is noted during coding) and usability due to the degree of advancement of the coding process. The author distinguishes between the first and second cycle, coding cycle, and methods suitable for them. This source is a resource that organizes the way of thinking about coding and presents a practical approach to coding within the methods described. Each of them has its strengths and weaknesses, which is why Saldana's position (2009) should be emphasized. The author recommends quite a free combination - depending on the needs of the researcher and the objectives of the study - of different methods of the first and second cycle.

Interviews were analysed about other interviews using the dream coding system itself. The analysis took the form of thematic analysis because it is the primary method of qualitative research and focuses on similar topics in interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) noted that one of the essential advantages of this method is its flexibility. All the topics selected were related to the research question, and the thematic analysis allowed us to extract necessary and similar responses of the respondents. The thematic analysis focuses on the non-obvious, latent content, i.e., it brings out the deeper meaning of the respondents' statements, not the superficial answers (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For this purpose, the probing method was used, which is often used in the qualitative research method. This means that the interviewer uses specific questions to get to the underlying meaning of the study participants' answers. Interpretation of patterns and motifs in the analyzed data set needed the theory and commitment of the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The emergence of leitmotifs facilitated data analysis and allowed us to come to conclusions to answer the research question.

To read the data carefully, the interviews were rewritten and read again (Braun and Clarke, 2006). General analysis and initial coding were then carried out. They were mainly focusing on exciting elements related to the research question. Four main topics were highlighted. They were selected based on repetitive patterns of meanings in the analysed data. The following themes were identified: (1) emotions accompanying phubbing in a relationship, (2) phubbing and pandemic, (3) strategies implemented into relationship life to eliminate phubbing, (4) effectiveness of implemented strategies. The topics listed have become the categories to be analysed. Based on the analysis of these themes, smaller themes for each item were extracted using coding that helped find those themes. An example of the division of topics into more minor issues and sub-topics is available in

Annex B. After analysing the sub-topics, the code data was reread. Then the most significant or the most repetitive answers were recorded in the results section. The solutions compared were discussed about the theory presented in the theoretical framework of this study.

3.6 Validity and reliability

The validity and credibility of interviews are usually hampered by the subjective and personal nature of in-depth interviews, followed by thematic data analysis. Still, both concepts are most commonly used when using a qualitative research method. The study's validity indicates whether precisely the tests that the researcher intended to perform were carried out. Reliability refers to the ability to repeat the study (Noble & Smith, 2015). A permanent list of topics allowed the study to be conducted in a consistent and orderly manner. Since each interview was recorded and transcripts were made, it was possible to come back to the study participants' statements at every stage of writing this master's thesis. Recordings and transcriptions also ensure that the author of the project did not change the comments of the respondents and that personal experiences and prejudices did not affect the results of the analysis. A clear description of the method used, an explanation of the main concepts related to the topic of the study, structure, and direct reliance on data ensured the study's internal validity. In qualitative research, this is referred to as credibility (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011).

On the other hand, a clear description of the sampling process and detailed sample characteristics have guaranteed external validity and transferability (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). This refers to applying the study in a different context or with a diverse group of study participants. It is not sure whether the study results would be consistent with another group of respondents, e.g., representatives of another generation. Still, it is expected that using the same sample using a different age group; the study will produce similar results. Although the term reliability is similar to the quantitative research concept, the study can be duplicated. In this case, the term refers to the possibility that other researchers would be able to follow the scientist's decisions in the original study (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). A detailed description of the theoretical background of the research, methodology, and results ensures research reliability.

3.7 Ethics

It should be realized that the researcher is not the only entity participating in the qualitative research. Partners in the implementation of intended tasks are study participants who are questioned or observed by the researcher (Komańda, 2011). The result is that the scope of responsibility of the person conducting the study does not only apply to the study procedure itself and the results achieved, but also to the persons through whom it was carried out. For the safety of the data of the study participants, a form was used to make the respondents aware of the study. When the respondent was ready to take part in the study, it was necessary to sign this consent form. The form informed the study participants about the manner and purpose of using their participation in the study

so that they could make an informed decision whether they want to participate in the study or not. The consent form informs about the subject and nature of the research and the implications for participants (Bryman, 2012). Although all study participants have agreed to publish their names, the names will remain anonymous for the need for this master's thesis, and nicknames have been used. Due to the coronavirus pandemic in the world, study participants received an electronic consent form. The respondents signed the consent form using an electronic signature or printed it, signed it, scanned it, and sent it to the researcher. It enabled the study participants to familiarize themselves with the form in the most convenient conditions and time and they could think about participating in the study.

In the next chapter the results of qualitative research conducted with the participation of 13 participants will be presented.

4. Results

To answer the research question: what strategies do Polish couples from Generation Y implement to eliminate phubbing behavior in a relationship? Thirteen in-depth interviews were conducted. This chapter will present the results obtained after analysing the in-depth interviews and the answers illustrating the four main topics found during the analysis. Topics that will be discussed are feelings that accompany phubbing, phubbing, and pandemic - how isolation affects phubbing behavior, strategies that couples implement into life to eliminate phubbing in conjunction with assessing the effectiveness of these strategies. The first topic explains: (1) what feelings arise when phubbing is present in a relationship. The second topic shows: (2) the romantic relationship and approach to phubbing change during isolation that people have been forced into by the coronavirus pandemic. Then, the study results will be given regarding: (3) strategies and actions that couples take to eliminate phubbing from a romantic relationship. Finally, the following will be illustrated: (4) assessing the effectiveness of these strategies. Each of these topics was divided into sub-topics that present the results of in-depth data analysis.

4.1 Feelings associated with phubbing

In the beginning, it should be noted that all respondents admitted that they did not know the term phubbing before; therefore, the researcher needed to explain the researcher required to explain this phenomenon again, for a full understanding of the main topic of the study. To determine if couples decide to implement phubbing elimination strategies and what strategies they are, it is necessary to find out how people who experience the phubbing feel and why couples decide to impose restrictions on themselves to eliminate phubbing behavior.

All study participants confirmed that they feel bad when their partner misuses their phone. Unanimity confirms Aagaard's (2019) conclusions that phubbing is annoying and disrespectful. Most respondents used the word "ignored" when referring to the well-being that accompanies them when

their partner phubbed. This is confirmed by Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas (2016), in which the authors indicated that more than half of the respondents feel ignored while the partner is abusing the phone. However, respondents have likely suggested phubbing, which shows that phubbing occurs when another ignores one person because of a cell phone. This indicates that the respondents' later statements noted anger and guilt as feelings that dominated during the partner's phubbing. For this reason, these feelings were considered during the analysis. The topic of emotions associated with phubbing in a relationship was divided into two sub-topics: (1) guilt for partner's phubbing, (2) anger. When analyzing subtopics, it was noticed that anger motivated by phubbing in a relationship has a dominant effect: (1) violent reactions to phubbing. During the data analysis, it was noted that extreme reactions related to phubbing in a relationship lead to conflict between partners. Therefore, the following subtopic was distinguished: (1) conflict in a relationship. The results obtained after analyzing each sub-topic are presented below. The next subtopic shows one of the two main feelings of phubbing: guilt for phubbing your partner.

4.1.1 Guilt for partner's phubbing

The feast that appeared in several respondents is a sense of guilt. Respondents blame themselves for their partners, abusing their telephone in their presence. One of the respondents said: 'I often wonder if I'm doing something wrong, maybe I'm boring or our way of spending time is boring since he is constantly checking the phone' (Respondent 7, 34, female). Guilt also accompanies another study participant who replied: 'I feel guilty that I don't meet my girlfriend's expectations. Our time together is not as exciting as it could be' (Respondent 10, 25, male). The statement of another respondent confirms the presence of guilt for phubbing a partner: 'sometimes I think that we got routine and I try to organize attractive spending time together, but I am slowly running out of ideas' (Respondent 13, 25, male).

The analysis showed that respondents who have the shortest romantic relationship feel guilty when their partner misuses their phone while spending time together. Respondent 7 and respondent 10 are in a romantic relationship for a year, while respondent 13 is in a relationship for two years. The statements of respondents who are in a relationship no longer indicate that guilt accompanies them when the partner misuses the phone. The respondents emphasize that they do not like those moments when a partner reaches for a cell phone while spending time together, but they do not find fault in themselves.

4.1.2 Anger

The second main feeling associated with phubbing in a romantic relationship is anger. The analysis of data collected during in-depth interviews showed that anger is the most frequently recorded feeling that appears in the link in phubbing among the respondents of this study. Most respondents indicated anger as the dominant feeling when they experience phubbing. Respondents said: 'I

immediately get nervous and raise my voice' (Respondent 1, 26, female), 'I'm angry when my boyfriend once again doesn't pay attention to me, just looks at the phone' (Respondent 4, 27, female).

It has been noticed that anger, concerning phubbing, is very often associated with violent reactions. A large proportion of respondents said they had reacted very violently due to anger caused by phubbing. One respondent said:

It annoys me a lot when my girlfriend reaches for the phone now and then. Sometimes I tell her to put her phone down or embarrass her that she is browsing Instagram again.

Unfortunately, there are situations when anger, dominates, and explodes (Respondent, 13, 25, male).

Another topic illustrates the connection between phubbing, anger, and violent reactions from partners experiencing phubbing.

4.1.2.1 Violent reactions resulting from anger

When analyzing data obtained through in-depth interviews, it was noted that violent reactions are the most common effect of anger caused by the partner's phubbing. Respondents admitted that sometimes they react very violently when they are angry. Study participants said: " I sometimes yell at my partner when he is too busy with his phone '(Respondent 3, 25, female). Another respondent said, for example:

My most violent reaction to his excessive use of the phone is in the car. When we stand at a red light, he immediately reaches for the phone and plays games. It annoys me very much because my life is in his hands. I quickly take his phone and hide it so that he cannot reach it (Respondent 6, 25, female).

Now that I think of my reactions, I feel ashamed. When my boyfriend pulls the phone next to me and writes something, laughs, browses, etc. I am furious. I am afraid that he is having a better time with someone on the Internet than with me. I want to know immediately what absorbs him. Once I even snatched the phone from his hand and checked what he was doing (Respondent 11, 26, female)

4.1.2.1.1 Conflict in a relationship

The vast majority of respondents noted that the violent reaction was the result of anger caused by the partner's phubbing admitted that their extreme reactions led to conflict in the relationship. Study participants reported situations in which a quarrel was the result of a too violent response to the partner's phubbing. One respondent said: 'My boyfriend is also quite strong and when I shout, he automatically does the same. The row is ready '(Respondent 1, 26, female). Another respondent admitted that the violent reaction caused by phubbing had broader consequences. The respondent said:

My girlfriend doesn't think she uses the phone much, so she doesn't understand my anger. As I could not stand it and explode, we quarrelled, she took offense at me, and we did not speak to each other for almost three days (Respondent 13, 25, male)

No respondent admitted that phubbing and violent reactions caused by it led to the separation. A quarrel or minor conflict between the partners is the dominant result of extreme reactions to phubbing in a relationship.

4.2 Phubbing and pandemic

A completely new topic currently explored is phubbing during isolation due to a coronavirus pandemic. As mentioned in this study's theoretical framework, the Covid-19 pandemic affected romantic relationships (Deese, 2020). The purpose of this section is to present the results obtained after analysing the interviews. One of the main topics connected to the research question of this project was phubbing during forced isolation. Interviews were carried out when it was forbidden to leave the house, except in particular situations. The world's unique situation was an inspiration to ask respondents and check whether, during isolation, phubbing behavior in their relationship changed.

During the lockdown, he often stays in a small apartment, and only technology allows contact with the outside world. As mentioned earlier, Generation Y is described as being permanently connected to the Internet (Bull, 2010), which is why phubbing during isolation can change significantly. Consequently, excessive use of the phone and practicing phubbing is a way to get rid of negative emotions, as mentioned earlier. Phubbing can get worse during isolation because it is a situation that provides a lot of stress and negative emotions. Although different rules must be followed in everyday life, the new restrictions may have affected people and their lives differently.

During the coding of interviews, three main topics related to phubbing and isolation caused by pandemics were identified: (1) factors increasing phubbing during the lockdown, (2) factors increasing tolerance to phubbing, (3) phubbing and intimate relationships during the lockdown. In the following subsections, each of the above topics is discussed in turn.

4.2.1 Factors intensifying phubbing during pandemic

The atypical situation in the world strongly affects people's lives (Brooks et al., 2020) and romantic relationships (Deese, 2020). During interviews, respondents were asked to describe how isolation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic affected phubbing in their relationship. Most respondents noted that during the lockdown, phubbing in their relationships deepened. By analyzing the study participants' statements, the main topics identified as factors deepening phubbing during lockdown were identified. This topic will present three main issues arising from this question: (1) increased contact with family and friends, (2) entertainment during isolation, (3) work during the lockdown.

4.2.1.1 Increased contact with family and friends

During the coding of interviews, it was noticed that a common reason for phubbing in a relationship during isolation is the desire to contact family and friends. Several respondents indicated that technology, in this case, cell phones, is the only way to contact loved ones and friends. As noted in the theoretical framework, during the crisis, in this case, the Covid-19 pandemic, increased stress can significantly affect romantic relationships (Neff & Karney, 2004).

Several study participants admitted that they are afraid of their loved ones, so they can interrupt their classes and answer the phone, even when they spend time with their partner. One respondent said: 'every day when the phone rings, I am afraid that I will find out that one of my relatives is sick, which is why it is so important to me (Respondent 11, 26, female). Also, several respondents said that during the lockdown, they talk on the phone every day with their family. The respondents admitted that they answer the phone, even when they are watching a movie with their partner or having dinner because they do not want to lose the opportunity to talk to loved ones, e.g., the respondent said:

When my mother calls, I always answer the phone. Now during the lockdown, I miss my family very much, and I try to use every moment to contact them. The film can be stopped or undone (Respondent 1, 26, female)

Respondents also indicated that it is essential for them to maintain friendly relations during isolation. The new situation in the world has prevented meetings, and technology seems to be the only way to enable safe contact with other people. Respondents reported that often contact a friend was more important to them than their romantic partner. One respondent admitted:

I don't have the opportunity to meet my friends, that's why we are always on the phone. We often send new ideas and follow the stock exchange together. We also regularly play online games together while talking to each other on Discord. I moved the show with my girlfriend several times by an hour or two because I devoted this time to my colleagues (Respondent 2, 25, male)

Other respondents also indicated that they spend a lot more time meeting friends online. The vast majority of respondents noted that they mainly use messengers available on the phone to contact friends, and it is essential for them to be in constant contact with a group of their friends. Study participants said: 'you need to find a way to contact friends, which is now difficult. The easiest way to write us is on Facebook because we can have a conversation there for our entire group (Respondent 8, 33, female),' during isolation we write even more with each other. We now have a lot more free time, and we exchange a lot of messages' (Respondent 5, 27, female).

The new world situation required all people to change their everyday and professional lifestyles immediately. Excessive stress and change of habits and limited contact with the family are conducive to the development of phubbing in a relationship.

4.2.1.2 Entertainment during lockdown

Entertainment was another major topic related to deepening phubbing during isolation. As already mentioned, the pandemic and related changes surprised everyone and forced them to change radically (Balzarini et al., 2020). All places providing traditional entertainment have been closed; cinemas, theaters, museums, restaurants, and pubs. People are forced to limit all activities.

Technology seems to be the most accessible source of entertainment during a pandemic. During the analysis of interviews, it was noted that respondents said that the entertainment they experience using mobile devices takes them a lot of attention and thus neglects their relationship with their partner.

One respondent admitted: 'My girlfriend is nervous when I play video games, but now I finally have time for it' (Respondent 13, 25, male). Another participant in the study noted: 'My boyfriend during quarantine, I have the impression that he is still playing PlayStation, he neglects me and all other duties' (Respondent 1, 26, female). Generation Y is fluent in operating technological devices (Rosa, 2013), so it finds a solution so quickly when places related to entertainment are inaccessible.

It was noted that several respondents during the isolation started using phones in a new way for them. Several study participants have indicated that they have not usually used the Internet on their phones for entertainment purposes. Respondents indicated that during quarantine, they started using new social media or systematically watched a more significant number of influencers on the Internet. One respondent said:

I've never subscribed to YouTube channels before and never watched any videos there regularly. During the lockdown, I started to subscribe to various channels, and now and then I find new, exciting accounts. Unfortunately, it takes me a lot of time during the day (Respondent 4, 27, female)

During quarantine, the phone became an even more significant entertainment source for respondents who indicated that it was only during a pandemic that they started using Netflix on the phone. It turns out that this type of convenience has a significant impact on deepening phubbing in a relationship. Respondents point out that if they start watching the series alone, they often spend the evenings separately without their partner. The respondents admitted that they were watching a few episodes and neglecting their relationship with their partner. One respondent summarized:

If we watch the series together, no problem. But sometimes I'm only interested in the story, and I watch it alone. Sometimes I spend half a night to finish the series season because I can't tear myself away '(Respondent 9, 25, male).

According to the respondents' statements above, entertainment experienced through technology actively contributes to phubbing in a relationship during isolation. Partners locked together at home during lockdown are looking for an alternative to traditional entertainment, often neglecting their romantic relationships.

4.2.1.3 Career

The last topic coded as common and central about the factors that aggravate phubbing during isolation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic is work. Although life slowed down, many people feel more stressed (Deese, 2020). Theoretically, people have more time for loved ones, but it is challenging to reconcile household duties with remote work. Crisis and isolation can significantly affect the well-being and relationships with household members (Neff & Karney, 2004).

Many jobs have been temporarily closed for security reasons. If possible, people started working remotely at home. Representatives of Generation Y who were participants in this study pointed out that work is one of the factors that cause intensification of phubbing in a relationship during the quarantine. Respondents pointed out that by working from home, they neglect their romantic relationship because they cannot manage their time at home well. Previously presented research (Gambin et al., 2020) showed that most young people in the age of Generation Y feel unwell during pandemic isolation. They are accustomed to active life, active everyday life (Sieńkowska, 2009), and the new situation is difficult for them.

Study participants said they sometimes procrastinate their work responsibilities. They must spend the evenings at work, and in a normal situation, the evenings were devoted to spending time with a partner. Respondents said: 'sometimes it is hard for me to get to work during the day, and then I sit up late to my duties (Respondent 2, 25, male). Another respondent noted: 'I usually spent the evenings with my boyfriend, but when I work remotely there is always something to do' (Respondent 12, 34, female). Also, companies' changes have influenced the higher frequency of using technology by employees at home. Respondents pointed out that e.g., daily meetings that took place face to face are now forced to implement remotely, which extends their time spent with technology at home. One respondent said:

Working from home, my work is much more demanding, and I spend much more time with the phone in my hand. Before the pandemic, I met in person with most clients, and now I have to call everyone '(Respondent 7, 34, female)

The responses showed that isolation could have different effects on people and relationships. Isolation surprised everyone, and it was challenging to prepare for it. Lack of experience meant that respondents and their partners cope differently. The next part of this thesis presents the second dominant topic that emerged during the coding of in-depth interviews.

4.2.2 Factors increasing tolerance to phubbing

Åagaard's research (2019) shows that phubbing has become an acceptable feature of communication, but it must be using the phone for a specific, significant purpose. During the analysis of interviews, it was noted that during the isolation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, respondents did not report

conflicts due to the excessive use of technology for remote work. The following sub-topics will show you what factors increase your tolerance for phubbing in a relationship. During the analysis of interviews, two factors were identified that do not cause conflicts and negative emotions related to phubbing.

4.2.2.1 Career

Even if the relationship is neglected by phubbing, but it is caused by paid work, most responses did not have a negative attitude. Some respondents showed understanding for a partner who abuses technology during shared moments. During the coding and analysis of interviews, it was noticed that the reason for the lack of adverse reactions to phubbing is paid work. Six respondents indicated that they have a lot of understanding and tolerance when a partner uses the phone during their joint time because the task is an essential element of life and sometimes requires that you devote time devoted initially to other activities. The answers are similar and contain the same context. Respondents can tolerate the partner's phubbing, but only when it concerns their work.

Sometimes it is not easy for me to spend our free time together, and customers call to arrange a session. But this is her work and passion by the way, so I tolerate it, especially since the conversations are not too long (Respondent, 9, 25, male)

Another respondent pointed out that: 'of course it is not the most pleasant thing in the world when during our joint time or family meetings my boyfriend answers the phone and disappears for several minutes or more, but I have to understand it because we have a loan and it has to be repaid' (Respondent 8, 33, female).

The thing that defines phubbing is mindless checking social media and thus ignoring your romantic partner (Aagaard, 2019). Therefore, some respondents tolerate the partner's phubbing because they see it as a higher goal.

4.2.2.2 Both partners practice phubbing

Another major topic that connects to the factor increasing tolerance to phubbing in a relationship is that both partners excessively use phones at the same time. When analyzing the study participants' statements, it was noted that in situations where both partners use a smartphone, there are no conflicts related to phubbing. Respondents said that during a pandemic and isolation associated with it, there are situations when they both use mobile phones at the same time. Partners are tolerant of each other because their attention is also diffused. This is confirmed by the statements of respondents who said: 'There are situations when each of us uses his phone, e.g., in the evening in bed. We don't have to get up in the morning now; everyone has time for their affairs on their phone '(Respondent 13, 25, male). Another respondent pointed out: "I have no right to get angry at my husband when he uses the phone next to me when I do it myself." The respondents admitted that during quarantine,

they use a lot more phones and other mobile gadgets, but it is spending time, and it does not make them angry if they do it at the same time.

Another topic raised the issue of the impact of phubbing on intimate relationships during isolation. Below are the results of an in-depth interview analysis regarding how phubbing affects intimate relationships during the lockdown.

4.2.3 Phubbing and intimate relationships during lockdown

The last topic related to Covid-19 phubbing and pandemic is the impact of phubbing on intimate relationships in a relationship. Since new conditions have been introduced and restrictions have been introduced globally, many things have changed. When analyzing in-depth interviews with representatives of Generation Y, it was noticed that increased phubbing affects intimate relationships. Some respondents timidly answered the question about the impact of phubbing on intimacy in a relationship, but a significant number of respondents gave a detailed answer. It has been coded that increased phubbing behavior during isolation negatively affects intimacy in a relationship. Respondents pointed out that the lack of contact with the environment deprives them of the desire for intimacy while increasing the desire to use technological devices to contact the outside world. One respondent said:

I have noticed an interesting thing recently. Maybe rather sad. I often put off close relations with my girlfriend during quarantine because I know that she will be here in an hour, evening, or tomorrow. When we gather a group of friends to play together online, I know that each of them will immediately go to their classes, and now is our time to play.

Ultimately, something rarely happens between my girlfriend and me, because the thought appears again 'maybe tomorrow or maybe the day after tomorrow' (Respondent 2, 25, male)

Answers with the same context appeared several more times. Study participants indicated that they consciously give up intimate contact with their partner because they are aware of a significant amount of time they will spend together during isolation. The respondents also admit that devices such as telephone or iPad take a large part of their attention during the day and do not have the strength and mental attitude to establish an intimate relationship. The respondent's statement confirms this: 'I sit at the computer all day, and all I think about is going to sleep' (Respondent 5, 27, female). It has also been noted that couples often take phones to bed, and their attention is not entirely focused on the partner. Several respondents admitted that the telephone is present in the bedroom almost every day during the quarantine. The respondent said:

Strange to talk about it, but these are the facts. When we are in bed, we both have a telephone with us. I browse what interests me and my husband, his favourite pages. Once I put down the phone and want to hug him, kiss him, his phone is in his hands all the time (Respondent 12, 34, female)

Disturbed intimate relationships during isolation apply to respondents of all ages. It was noted that both the youngest and the oldest respondents indicated that increased phubbing during the lockdown makes intimacy in a relationship weaken. Cisco (2014), in his research, showed that many people use the phone just before bedtime, and the phone is also the first thing they reach for when they wake up. However, such action makes phubbing intensified, which significantly affects intimate relationships in a relationship. The issue of ignoring the romantic partner for a cell phone and disturbing intimate life seems severe and growing, especially during isolation. Young people choose mobile phones and other mobile devices instead of spending time with their partner and cultivating intimacy in a relationship.

The next section presents the analysis results regarding the strategies that couples implement to eliminate phubbing in a relationship. The topic was divided into two sub-topics because the strategies mentioned by the respondents can be divided into policies implemented in everyday life before the pandemic, and those that began to be implemented during isolation.

4.3 Strategies to eliminate phubbing behaviour

Theoretical studies discussed earlier show that researchers have suggested strategies that may be helpful in compulsive computer use (Dotson, 2012). To answer the research question, during in-depth interviews, the respondents were asked if they had strategies, if so, which ones to eliminate phubbing in a relationship. It is also essential to determine if young people who live with technology daily try to limit the use of telephones and other mobile devices. If they implement such strategies, then what are they about. During the analysis of data collected during in-depth interviews, two main topics were noted relating to strategies to help eliminate phubbing in a relationship: (1) strategies implemented before a pandemic, (2) strategies implemented during isolation.

4.3.1 Strategies implemented before the pandemic

When asked about the strategies they implement to eliminate phubbing in a relationship, respondents pointed out that although they did not know the term phubbing before, they tried to limit this type of behavior. The respondents mentioned that they noticed that technology dominates their lives and that they must impose some restrictions. During the analysis of respondents' statements, four leading strategies implemented for life before isolation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic were noticed. They will be described in turn: (1) not using the telephone during joint exits, (2) not taking the phone to the bedroom, (3) not using the phone during meals at home, (4) telephone applications.

4.3.1.1 We are not using the phone during dates

One of the strategies most frequently mentioned by the study participants, which aims to reduce phubbing in a relationship, is to give up telephones during joint exits, e.g., to restaurants or the

cinema. Several respondents motivated the decision to apply restrictions because they often noticed this type of behavior in other people and did not support such action. One respondent noted: 'during our dates, there is one rule. The phone always has Wi-Fi turned off. You cannot use Facebook and other accounts. This is the principle we both stick to. (Respondent 6, 25, female). Another participant in the study said:

When we were able to go out for dinner, we always put our phones on the table next to the plates. The screen lit up, and we looked at the phone with interest. When we observed similar behavior in other people in the restaurant, we realized that we do the same. To this day, we pay attention not to pull out the phones when we are at dinner or during family celebrations (Respondent 3, 25, female)

Several other statements had the same context. Participants in the study often pointed out that they were surprised that during dates in restaurants, they often noticed that other people were not attending the meeting because they were busy with their phones.

4.3.1.2 We are not taking the phone to the bedroom

It was noted that several respondents replied that at least once during the relationship, they tried to eliminate phubbing by not taking the phone to the bedroom. Respondents indicated that in most cases, at least one phone is present in the bedroom. To exclude this habit from life, the study participants used the following strategies: 'for some time we didn't take phone calls to the bedroom to have time alone in the evening' (Respondent 1, 26, female). Another respondent replied: 'I even bought a traditional alarm clock so as not to take my phone to the bedroom' (Respondent 2, 25, male). During the interviews, it was noticed that a large proportion of respondents reported that they were aware that the use of telephones at bedtime harmed intimate relationships in the relationship, but also on health and sleep. One respondent said:

Once I lost my phone, so I was forced to function without it for several days. I slept a lot better than; I got up faster in the morning because I didn't look at social media in the morning, and of course, my relationship benefited as well. Therefore, now I am also trying to use this method and do not take the phone to the bedroom (Respondent 5, 27, female)

4.3.1.3 We are not using phones during meals at home

A large proportion of respondents are focused not on using phones during shared meals. Study participants indicated that shared meals are an essential part of the day and try to ensure that telephones are not present at the time. One respondent admitted: 'a joint meal is a time to talk and exchange experiences of the day. The phone bothers you (Respondent 4, 27, female), "it irritates me when someone plays with the phone at dinner, so I try not to do it, and I ask my boyfriend too" (Respondent 11, 26, female). The respondents also indicated that they do not always have the

opportunity to have dinner together, so it is essential to celebrate these moments. One respondent said:

I appreciate the time when I can have dinner with my partner. I do not want the phone to disturb our peace, so we have a contract that we do not use smartphones while eating dinner
(Respondent 8, 33, female)

The same context appeared in several more statements. Respondents pointed out that technology dominates their lives and that they are trying to find some sphere from which they can eliminate mobile devices.

4.3.1.4 Phone applications

Respondents' answers to the question about strategies to eliminate phubbing behavior often contained similar themes as phone applications. Couples want to limit the use of mobile phones in their presence reach for solutions that force them to re-use the telephone. Respondents indicated:

I used to use the Freedom application to limit the use of the phone. The idea was to plant a tree, and the tree would grow if the phone screen did not turn on. When the phone was unlocked, the tree withered away. Kind of a funny way, but later statistics showing the number of dead trees were terrifying (Respondent 12, 34, female)

Together with my girlfriend, we installed an application that measures how much time is spent on the general use of the phone during the day and provides a specification that shows which apps and social media were visited most often (Respondent 2, 25, male)

A large proportion of respondents indicated that they had once been in contact with phone applications that monitor the smartphone's usage time or restrict access to it. Respondents' answers suggest that Generation Y is strongly associated with new technology, telephones, and other mobile devices. Even wanting to eliminate phubbing from their relationship, they reach for the help of technology. The next topic shows how effective strategies that couples implement or use to eliminate phubbing behavior in a romantic relationship.

4.3.2 Strategies implemented during isolation

Since the interviews were conducted during the isolation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, respondents asked about strategies to eliminate phubbing, often referred to like the current situation. They talked about strategies that were once implemented in their lives, about strategies that now apply, but also about completely new strategies implemented during isolation. Since many young people now work remotely, the strategy of eliminating phubbing-related behaviors concerns the sphere of work. The next sub-topic describes the strategy of removing phubbing in a relationship that has been implemented during isolation. During the analysis of data collected during interviews, one strategy was identified that helps to reduce phubbing during a pandemic: (1) workday routine.

4.3.2.1 Working day routine

A large proportion of respondents noted that the pandemic changed their lives and moved their work home. Respondents said they had not had to do remote work for such a long time. Initially, it was a big challenge for them and confused their lives. To separate professional and private life, it was necessary to use a strategy that would help to survive this difficult time, which is isolation. Study participants reported that working from home meant that they were putting off their duties, which resulted in the loss of free time. A large proportion of respondents said that they neglected their relationship with their partner because they focused on overdue work. During the data analysis, one strategy was selected, which was implemented in the majority of respondents who work remotely. To avoid neglecting the partner and separating professional and private life, respondents imposed a routine of the working day on themselves. One respondent said: 'I spent many evenings at the computer because I didn't feel like working when it was time. As a result, I neglected some evening rituals that I have with my girlfriend '(Respondent 9, 25, male). Another respondent summarized:

I have a daily schedule. I had to develop such a routine. Otherwise, my day was full of chaos. Now I know when it's time to work and when it's a pleasure. I try to spend evenings with my boyfriend because we haven't had as much time in ourselves as we have now. At 9 o'clock I start to procure, at 13 there is time for a break, and to 16 I try to fulfill all work-related obligations' (Respondent 5, 27, female)

4.4 Effectiveness of the strategy

The last topic that emerged during interviews is the effectiveness of relationship-sensitive strategies to reduce phubbing. The assessment is subjective, but it can still help other couples struggling with phubbing or therapists dealing with couple's therapy. In the previous subsection, strategies that reduce phubbing in a relationship are divided into two main topics: strategy before and during isolation. This section presents the subjective assessment of implemented strategies: (1) the effectiveness of policies implemented before the lockdown and (2) the effectiveness of the new strategy implemented during the lockdown.

4.4.1 Effectiveness of strategies implemented before a pandemic

The strategies outlined above to help eliminate phubbing in a relationship have been implemented before the COVID-19 pandemic. Four dominant strategies were identified, the subjective assessment of which is presented below.

4.4.1.1. Effectiveness of strategy: We are not using phones during dates

Respondents asked about the effectiveness of the implemented strategy of eliminating phubbing in a relationship, which is not using the phone during mutual exits, unanimously admitted that the strategy works. All survey participants who reported that they limit the use of smartphones during mutual retreats, e.g., to restaurants, indicate that this method has much helped them improve their romantic relationship. The respondent said: 'This method is good for us because we use it together' (Respondent 6, 25, Female). Another respondent confirmed the effectiveness of the method: 'we focus only on ourselves and nothing distracts us' (Respondent 3, 25, female). The answer to another respondent was: 'the lack of a telephone during our joint exits is salvation. It is better to talk and listen to the other person' (Respondent 9, 25, male).

All respondents who reported that they do not use telephones while spending time together in public places are satisfied with this method. However, study participants note that initially getting used to the new restrictions was not easy and required a lot of commitment from both partners.

Understanding and a free approach to this topic are necessary to implement such a strategy in life comfortably. Despite this, the strategy was considered useful and recommendable. Several respondents indicated that this is an excellent way to start because going to restaurants, for example, does not happen every day, and you can get used to this limitation in small steps.

4.4.1.2 Effectiveness of strategy: We are not taking phones to bedroom

Participants of the study, when asked about the effectiveness of the strategy they implement into life; that is, they do not take phone calls to the bedroom, they had divided opinions. Regarding the method of leveling out phubbing in the relationship, which is not taking the phone to the bedroom, there have been conflicting views about the effectiveness. One respondent noted that the method works well and helps eliminate phubbing in a relationship. However, it was pointed out that the study participant and his partner had to take additional steps to support this method. Study participant said:

I even bought a traditional alarm clock so that I could leave my phone outside the bedroom.

The method is excellent; we sleep better with my girlfriend and have more time for ourselves in the evenings' (Respondent 2, 25, male)

It turned out that the implementation of the method of not taking the phone to the bedroom causes couples an additional problem. Respondents said: " the technique might be useful, but we don't have a watch at home other than the one on the smartphone, so the phone always returned to the bedroom after all '(Respondent 13, 25, male). Another study participant said: 'I have the only alarm clock on the phone, so this method quickly stopped working in our relationship' (Respondent 1, 26, female). From respondents' statements, the method of not taking the phone to the bedroom has potential. However, it requires additional actions.

4.4.1.3 Effectiveness of strategy: We are not using phones during meals at home

One of the strategies implemented by couples, which was identified during the analysis, is to limit the use of the phone during shared meals at home. Respondents who reported implementing this strategy said: 'it was not easy at first, but now I appreciate that we are both trying to improve our relationship in this way' (Respondent 5, 27, female), 'it is natural for me now that together, the phone stays in another room' (Respondent 10, 25, male). Regarding the strategy of limiting the use of the telephone during shared meals at home, all study participants reporting the use of this method confirmed its effectiveness. Respondents also indicated that the method is effective because both partners are involved, although the beginnings of implementing restrictions were not easy. Each of the respondents reported their own experiences with this method, but a consistent context of all statements was noted.

4.4.1.4 Effectiveness of the strategy of installing applications on the phone

Apps that monitor the frequency of phone use and limit smartphone access are the fourth separate strategy. As with the strategy of not taking the phone to the bedroom, this strategy also did not find supporters in all participants of the study. It turned out that respondents were removing applications from their phones after seeing statistics showing how much time they spend with the phone in hand. One respondent said: 'these statistics at the end of the day started to shock me, and I prefer not to know how many hours I waste on browsing social media' (Respondent 3, 25, female). Another respondent said: 'Freedom application was fun initially, but when I had to answer the phone because someone was calling from work, it negatively affected my statistics, and I stopped seeing sense' (Respondent 12, 34, female). It turned out that the study participants noticed one more thing that adversely affects the effectiveness of this strategy. The respondents admitted that there are situations when they use an offline phone, e.g., play games, and then it is no longer visible in the application. The respondent said: 'statistics from the application are sometimes incorrect because when I use the phone offline, the application does not take this into account' (Respondent 2, 25, male). According to the respondents' statements, applications make us aware of how much time a phone is used per day. This is the right side of this strategy, whereas this is not the best long-term method, according to the participants of this study.

4.4.2 Effectiveness of the strategy implemented during isolation

During the data analysis, one strategy was identified that couples implement during isolation to reduce phubbing in a relationship. The opinions of the participants of this study are presented below about the effectiveness of the method, which is the workday routine.

4.4.2.1 Effectiveness of the strategy: working day routine

The strategy, in which the main element is accurate planning of the workday, proved to be very useful for the study participants. Most of the respondents who reported that it was necessary to implement this type of activity into their lives are satisfied with this method. Despite its effectiveness, as the respondents pointed out, this strategy is challenging to implement. One respondent said: "the technique is proper, but its effectiveness can only be seen when we learn to live 100% with the awareness of new realities" (Respondent 10, 25, male). Another respondent said:

It wasn't elementary for me to estimate how much time I will need to work at home. When I learned to separate my professional and private life, I see many advantages of my routine (Respondent 3, 25, female).

Although study participants pointed out that remote work was not a reason for conflict in a relationship, they felt discomfort and confusion when their day was disturbed due to work. According to respondents, it is necessary to separate work from personal life. Still, it is not easy when working in an environment that is associated with rest, private, and intimate experience. Despite initial difficulties, the strategy was positively evaluated by the majority of participants in this study.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results presented in the previous part of this thesis, the answer to the research question can be given. However, this does not mean that there are no other equally effective strategies for eliminating phubbing in a relationship. The beginning of this chapter shows that respondents, i.e., representatives of generation Y, do not know the term phubbing, but observe such behavior in everyday life in their romantic relationship. It has been noticed that phubbing's primary emotions and feelings are the feelings of being ignored. In contrast, this emotion has not been described as the main one because previous studies have already shown that the feeling of being ignored appears (Aagaard, 2019). The response of the study participants could also be the result of a suggestion created by the definition of phubbing, which was discussed. There are two main feelings associated with phubbing in a relationship: guilt for the partner's phubbing and anger. After analysing the statements, it was noticed that the sense of anger leads to a violent reaction of one of the partners, which in turn leads to conflict in the relationship.

During the research preparation, it turned out that phubbing during isolation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic would be a new and investigable issue. During the data analysis, three main topics related to phubbing during the lockdown were identified. In-depth analysis of the data showed that pandemic is a time when the desire to contact family and friends is intensified. Entertainment is limited only to the closest environment, i.e., home, and work is moved home. These three factors have been classified as aggravating phubbing in a relationship. Respondents admitted that mainly due to these three factors, phubbing in their relationship had changed negatively; deepened.

However, when analyzing data related to phubbing and isolation, it was noted that the paid work and the fact that both partners use the phone simultaneously contribute to increased tolerance to phubbing in a relationship. Phubbing during isolation was observed as increased, and it also affects intimate relationships in romantic relationships. Respondents' statements suggest that phubbing in a relationship during pandemic isolation contributes to the deterioration of close relationships.

Finally, to answer the research question posed in this thesis, what strategies do Polish couples from Generation Y implement to eliminate phubbing behavior in a relationship? The third main topic was carefully analyzed - strategies that couples implement to eliminate phubbing in a relationship. The results suggest that Polish couples from Generation Y applied strategies to eliminate phubbing before the Covid-19 pandemic, and discovered a new, needed strategy during the lockdown.

The strategy of not using the phone during joint meetings in public places was considered sufficient and suitable for the relationship. It was noticed that shared meals at home are a significant time for most respondents, so in this sphere, the restrictions on using the phone are visible. What's more, the study participants consider the method of not using smartphones during joint meals as very useful and beneficial for the relationship. The strategy of not taking the phone to the bedroom was another primary strategy exchanged by couples but did not find many supporters. Survey respondents noticed that additional actions are needed, e.g., buying a new alarm clock or watch for this method to be effective. Although such action also does not guarantee the effectiveness of this method. Only one participant in the study admitted that the method is effective. Still, it should be noted that it is necessary to prepare for it and equip it with the appropriate equipment, e.g., an alarm clock. The strategy that aims to install applications that monitor and limit the phone's use seems well known to the study participants. Respondents knew the names of such applications, knew how they work, but did not consider this strategy effective. The possibility of this strategy emerging has been provided in the theoretical framework of this master's thesis. It has been reported that this method is not sufficient and does not help Generation Y representatives to eliminate phubbing in a romantic relationship.

5.1 Discussion

This study aimed to gain knowledge about the strategies that couples implement to reduce phubbing in a relationship. These studies present several theoretical implications for phubbing. Regarding some considerations and issues, the findings of this thesis are consistent with existing literature and suggest new perspectives. During interviews, it turned out that Generation Y representatives in this study had never encountered the term phubbing before. They notice in their relationship behaviors associated with this term, but they are unaware of the causes and consequences of this problem. This is due to the lack of media education, which in the current world should be a natural element of education (Notten & Nikken, 2016). Perhaps if young people were aware of what phubbing could

lead to, they would pay more attention to how they use technology. Bearing in mind that phubbing has serious health consequences, e.g., depression, one should promote knowledge of phubbing and other new technology-related terms. Awareness about ways to fight phubbing is also fundamental. Since young people do not know that phubbing exists and that it is a real problem threatening mental health, they even do not know how to counteract it.

Not every use of technological gadgets can be attributed to addiction to the Internet or smartphone. However, in such a fast-growing world, it is better to take a more critical look at specific behaviors presented by people and try to prevent possible adverse effects (Vallor, 2016). Extending knowledge about implementable strategies to reduce phubbing can be very helpful and useful. If people were more critical of their romantic relationships and how they use smartphones and other mobile devices, it would be easier for them to maintain a balanced relationship and not have to impose such drastic restrictions on their lives.

These studies are also the first to include the results of phubbing and social isolation. While preparing the theoretical framework of this study, it turned out that phubbing and social isolation have similar consequences. The danger of phubbing during social isolation can be very significant. People at the age of the participants in this study have never experienced this type of situation before. The changes caused by Covid-19 pandemic have radically affected people's lives. One strategy has been reported to help eliminate phubbing in a relationship, but it concerns remote work. If someone does not work remotely, is isolated from the public, and experiences phubbing or practices phubbing, it can have very unpleasant consequences discussed in this thesis. Therefore, education and raising people's awareness are important (Notten & Nikken, 2016) to counteract phubbing and prevent the severe consequences associated with it.

5.2 Limitations and future research

The first limitation associated with this study concerns the housing situation of the respondents and the sample size. It seems significant whether a couple lives together or personally in terms of phubbing and implemented methods to eliminate phubbing. Although the author of this thesis obtained information about the housing situation of the study participants, the impact of this situation on the perception of phubbing has not been studied. Future research could focus on interviews with more or just respondents who do not live with their partner to accurately know their point of view. On the other hand, future research could also focus on respondents who indicate that they live with their partners. This would give more knowledge about phubbing in relationships and the methods they implement to eliminate phubbing.

Another limitation is the country where the research was conducted. Research has focused on Polish couples, and it is not known whether the results obtained from the analysis would be consistent with the results of studies carried out in another country. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, Generation Y in Poland covers a broader age group (Sieńkowska, 2009), so future

research could focus on representatives of a country that has a similar generation time frame with other countries for more consistent results.

The third limitation of these studies is the time during which the interviews were conducted. Although isolation made it possible to study phubbing during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, it could distort the strategies they implement into the lives of couples to eliminate phubbing. As noted in the theoretical framework, the time of crisis and isolation causes a lot of stress and drastically affects all life activities (Brooks et al., 2020). Therefore, the picture of life before the pandemic may have been distorted. Future research could focus on broadly exploring strategies implemented to eliminate phubbing while excluding pandemic and crisis issues.

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Appendix A: Overview Interviewees

Nr	Name	Age	Gender	Education	Occupation	Relationship length	Living with a partner
1	Respondent	26	Female	Bachelor Pedagogy (graduated)	Sales Representative/medical sector (full time)	3 years	Yes
2	Respondent	25	Male	Master Innovation Management (graduated)	Business Developer/IT sector (full time)	6 years	Yes
3	Respondent	25	Female	Bachelor International Law (graduated)	Senior specialist in a management office in the state-owned company (full time)	7 years	No
4	Respondent	27	Female	Swedish philology (4 th year)	Swedish lector (part time), Receptionist at the ferry (part time)	2 years	Yes
5	Respondent	27	Female	Master Administration (graduated)	Sanctions Processing Specialist (full time)	10 years	Yes
6	Respondent	25	Female	Master Human Nutrition Technology (graduated)	Lab worker (full time)	4 years	No
7	Respondent	34	Female	Master Polish philology (graduated)	Sales representative/Tobacco company (full time)	1 year	No

8	Respondent	33	Female	Bachelor Tourism Management (graduated)	Waitress at Anatewka (full time)	6 years	Yes
9	Respondent	25	Male	Master IT studies (5 th year)	Web Designer (part time)	5 years	No
10	Respondent	25	Male	Bachelor Business Management (graduated)	Social Media Marketing (full time)	1 year	Yes
11	Respondent	26	Female	Law (5 th year)	Bartender at the bowling alley (part time)	4 years	Yes
12	Respondent	34	Female	Master Nursing school (graduated)	Wedding Planner (full time)	11 years	Yes
13	Respondent	25	Male	Marketing (4 th year, external studies)	Category Manager/Purchase department (full time)	2 years	Yes

Appendix B. Themes and subthemes

