

Exploring the impact of social media short-form videos on adolescents' psychological and psychosocial well-being

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Abstract. This research paper examines the positive and negative impacts of social media short-form videos on adolescents' psychological and psychosocial well-being. In most circumstances, parents and schoolteachers would equal the usage of social media with bad influences and results to their children and students. However, with the rapid development of social media, it is easily accessible to everyone, including adolescents as one of the major user groups. They choose to use social media to meet their certain needs and gratifications. So, there should be some positive impacts that go along with the usage of social media, particularly the short-form videos. Incorporating responses from interviews, this study demonstrates that the short-form videos on social media have both positive and negative impacts. Positive impacts play an important role on the usage of social media, which includes improving recognition level, enhancing social interactive skills, relieving stress level, etc. The adolescents' social media dependency is not as heavy as most of the adults assume. This paper puts forward several suggestions to allow adolescents to use social media, especially short-form videos, benefiting their psychological and psychosocial well-being to the most and prevent short-form video addiction.

1 Introduction

The rise of social media has been raised sharp discussions about its impacts on adolescents' psychological and psychosocial well-being, including the emotional regulation disorder, neuroticism, addiction, dissatisfaction of life, recognition level and social interactions. Among all kinds of forms of new media, short-form videos have been become more and more popular than other media products on the Internet over the last few decades. Because of its variations, convenience, entertainment and social interests, short-form videos can easily go virus on the social media platforms. Then, people would be addicted to them and watch them nonstop.

China is a rapid developing market in social media, with nearly 850 million online video users, by March 2020. Among those, short-form video users have reached 773 million [1]. Adolescents and college students have accounted to be the major users in this enormous user base [2]. These two user groups are mostly and more easily affected by the short-form videos

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on social media. According to one government report about Chinese Adolescents' Internet Usage, the accessibility of the Internet for adolescents has been reached 96.8% by 2021 [3]. The addiction rate has decreased, as recognized by both parents and adolescents. Over 40% of adolescent netizens have been exposed to negative information, the most frequent of which is about showing off fortune, family background, reluctance to work or study, etc. The information absorbed online can have great and serious influence on teenagers' worldviews, life philosophy and values.

When mentioning adolescents' use of social media, most of parents and teachers may only think of the drawbacks and raise antipathy of it. Are there only negative impacts of using social media? Lots of researchers have put significant academic attention on the correlation between the well-being of adolescents' psychological situation and the use of social media. Numerous empirical studies have investigated the complex influence of social media engagement and adolescents' mental health. There is a positive correlation between social media use and feelings of connectedness and social support among adolescents [4]. Additionally, social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook have been praised for fostering creativity and self-expression among users and criticized for forming body image anxiety issues, particularly among adolescent girls [5-7].

Few studies have examined the intricate connections between psychological, demographic, and short-form video influence; most studies have only examined the effects of social media dependency. Besides this, the correlation between rural area high school students' social media usage and their psychological well-being has yet to be robustly researched. The research of positive impact of social media is insufficient. This paper aims to address the current research gap. By investigated the effects of daily social media use, mainly focused on short-form video platforms, the positive and negative influences have been found and summarized, various suggestions to make the most of teenagers' usage of social media have been put forward.

2 Methodology

2.1 Research objectives

This research aims to evaluate and analyze the positive and negative influences on teenagers' psychosocial status between 15 to 17 years old in Beijing, China.

Four high school students were interviewed for this research. They were all born and raised in Beijing. The male and female ratio is 1:1. Two of them are freshmen, one is a sophomore, and the other is a junior.

2.2 Research outline

The interview outline was generated and inspired by previous literature, and it was pretested two weeks before, with two same-age high school students in Beijing, China to ensure the reliability and accessibility of the interview. The interview questions can be well understood and interpreted by the subjects. The finalized instrument has six themes, and each one measures a different construct: emotional regulation disorder, neuroticism, addiction, dissatisfaction about life, recognition level, and social interactions. Following the transcription of the interviews, a thematic analysis was carried out. To do this, all of the data had to be coded before six themes could be found and examined. Each theme was examined to gain an understanding of how much did short-form videos influencing subjects' psychosocial status.

The measurement themes and interview outline are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Measurement Themes and Items.

	Themes	Items
1	Emotion Regulation Disorder	How do you feel when you see negative comments under your posts?
2	Neuroticism	Do you feel relaxed and stress relieved when watching short-form videos?
3	Addiction	How much time do you spend every day on short-form video apps?
4	Dissatisfaction about Life	Do you often compare yourself with the one in the short-form videos?
5	Recognition Level	What kinds of short-form videos do you watch?
6	Social Interactions	Do you use short-form videos as a content for conversations with your family and friends?

2.3 Interview procedure

In order to gain deeper insight into the positive and negative influence of short-form videos on teenagers’ psychosocial status, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four 15-17-year-olds in Beijing, China. One of the subjects was educated by the international school system; the rest of the subjects were educated by the local school system. The interviews were all conducted in person, and recorded by recording devices, which can ensure the reliability of the answers by observing the subjects’ facial expressions. The subjects were interviewed in quiet and safe places, such as their schools, and coffee shops. The process went well and smoothly. The duration of the interviews normally took 30 minutes or so. The interviews started from May 30 to June 9, 2024, and data analysis started on June 10, 2024.

3 Results

3.1 Demographic characteristics

Four high school students from Beijing, China participated in this research, 50% were female (N=2) and 50% male (N=2); their ages ranged between 15 to 17 (100%). All of the participants live in urban areas (100%). Key demographic characteristics of the interview respondents are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Key Demographic Characteristics of the Interview Respondents.

Demographic Variable	Variable	N	Percentage
Gender	Female	2	50%
	Male	2	50%
Grade	Freshman	1	25%
	Sophomore	2	50%
	Senior	1	25%
Education System	Local	3	75%

	International	1	25%
Location	Urban Area	4	100%

3.2 Preference for social media applications

In the beginning of each interview, the subjects were asked about their usage preference for social media applications. The most used social media platforms were WeChat and Bilibili. WeChat is an instant messaging app, enabling its users to make and receive audio and video calls, as well as send text messages, emojis, images, and videos to specific contacts [8]. Additionally, user can create WeChat groups with up to 500 members. It has other social networking functions, such as Moments, which users can share their life and make major announcements, and official article or video accounts, where all kinds of contents are posted via these functions. Bilibili is one of China’s largest online video platforms. It is popular among the young people, one out of every two young people is using Bilibili [9]. This platform offers a vast selection of media formats and genres, such as videos, live broadcasting, and video games. Contents are diversified by users’ interests so that strong emotional connections of users to contents are built successfully.

According to the responses, in high school students’ daily life, WeChat is the most frequently used social media app, for contacting with family and friends, discussing academic problems and exams, posting daily homework in the group chat, and absorbing some interesting information, etc. The second most used social media app is Bilibili. Students normally watch short-form videos, movies, anime on it in their spare time. Compared to TikTok and Kuai, high school students preferred Bilibili because of its strongly connected community, abundant choices, and diversity of contents and formats.

3.3 Impact of the social media

3.3.1 *Emotion regulation disorder*

When asked about respondents’ feelings when they saw negative comments under social media posts, three of the respondents tended to ignore the negative comments and thought that it is not necessary to strike back at the haters, although they disagreed with the haters and felt the haters were arrogant and misleading. One respondent (male, 16) considered the community of his most used social media application as friendly, there were fewer negative comments because of the domain was neutral, and lack of human’s subjective opinions. The criteria used to identify emotion regulation included awareness, understanding and acceptance of emotions, ability to control behaviors under negative emotional state, and emotion regulation strategies’ appropriate uses.

One respondent (female, 15) noted a correlation between emotion regulation disorder and the problematic use of social media: “I think that the more time I spend on social media, the guiltier I feel. But it is hard to stop binge watching the short-form videos online. Time easily goes by without notice. The guiltiness makes me rethink about it throughout the day and night, which usually affects the sleep and the efficiency of study.”

Responses seem to reach a consensus that social media use helps control mood. Spending the right amount of time on it can occasionally make the users feel better. However, it has more possibility to bring negative effects.

3.3.2 *Neuroticism*

When asked about how often they felt nervous, four respondents didn’t show the trait of neuroticism that much in the interviews. For most of the time, they felt nervous and stressed

out because of some important exams, schedule, or intense school activities. Just like one respondent (female, 17) confessed that recently she felt anxious and annoyed by one school competition for almost three weeks. During this period, she had trouble in modulating herself to a normal emotion state. She always forced herself not to think about the arguments with teammates. Studying for a longer time, sleeping, or doing something calm, such as calligraphy, were the ways she regulated her emotions.

Another female respondent admitted that she was always afraid her performance and appearance weren't good enough. When interacting with others, she often felt frustrated. The emotions had affected her behaviors, such as often having anger with her parents or friends, rebelling to study, browsing social media for a long time, etc. Missing messages from her group chats or social media posts' comments made her feel stressed out. So, she was more dependent on social media than her peers.

On the other hand, male high school students felt less nervous and anxious in life. Two male respondents had their unique ways of adjusting their emotions under pressure, for instance, chatting with classmates, listening to music, cycling, smelling perfumes, etc.

3.3.3 Addiction

The respondents were asked about their opinions on whether considered themselves as a binge watcher of short-form videos. Three respondents didn't think they were addicted giving a hard "no" for answer, and one respondent considered herself to have addiction for social media to some extent (see Figure 1). The consumption time for social media applications was measured for addiction. On a daily basis, they usually spend no more than two hours on weekdays, and three to four hours on weekends.

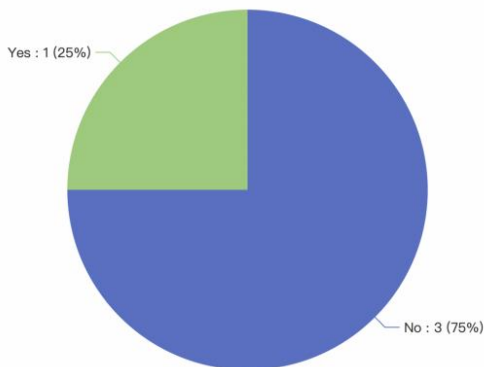


Fig. 1. Addiction for Social Media

High school students living in urban areas don't usually have an addiction to social media, because their life is filled with study and extra curriculum activity. Their relationship with social media is healthy. The respondents normally used social media to fulfill some gratifications, such as checking messages, searching for necessary information, improving English listening proficiency, relaxation on weekends.

One respondent (female, 17) said, "I don't really use TikTok that much, by controlling myself to be away from it, I think it is toxic. The algorithm keeps pushing new short-form videos nonstop, although many of my peers spend lots of spare time on it. The video accounts on WeChat are a better choice for me. The more I spend time on short-form videos, the more annoyed and anxious I am. I don't want to feel regretful for not studying enough and stuck

in the vicious loop of binge-watching social media. So, twenty to thirty minutes would be my normal daily consume for short-form videos.”

3.3.4 Dissatisfaction about Life

In the interview, the respondents were asked to grade their satisfaction of current life. From 1 to 10, one was the lowest, and ten was the highest. Out of four respondents, two males rated their life for 8, two females gave a 7 and 6 (see figure 2). As current high school students, although there was still space to improve, they were satisfied with their overall study and life.

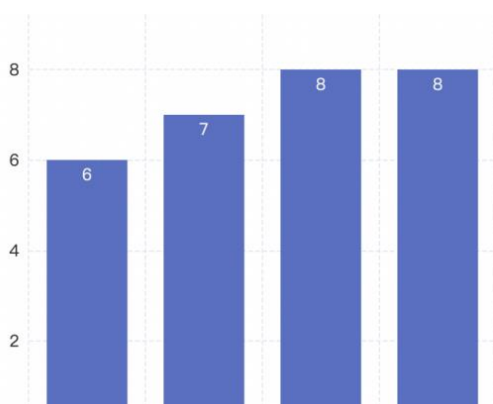


Fig. 2. Grades for Satisfaction of life

When asked about how often they compared themselves with the one in the short-form videos shared on social media, one respondent (female, 17) said, “I don’t care about other netizens’ contents, but only sometimes click into my best friends’ homepage or WeChat Moments. So, I don’t have any jealousy or anxiety about other’s progress or achievement.” The other respondent (male, 15) claimed that he can’t avoid the comparison with others on social media from time to time, which caused anxiety accordingly. But he had his own way of solving the anxiety, which was immersing himself in current top-priority tasks. This can help him forget about the achievements others have.

According to the results showed in Addiction, one of the most important indicators of high school students’ reliance on social media is their level of life satisfaction. The findings indicate a negative correlation between social media use and life satisfaction. Because the respondents were busy with schoolwork, they didn’t have that much of time and need to use social media as a method to fill in their time, so they graded their life satisfaction for a sound result.

The lowest grade was given by the respondent (female, 17) who had anxiety about her body image. She revealed that because of puberty, she gained weight. At the same time, the girls on the social media showed their skinny body image, which brought her anxiety and ate on a diet. This was the major factor that caused her dissatisfaction with her life.

3.3.5 Recognition Level

From the perspective of recognition level, four respondents all agreed that social media, especially short-form videos and articles, did have benefits in broadening their horizon with a large amount of information. For example, one respondent (male, 15) noted that the hyperlinks of academic papers and official websites under the social media videos and articles were very useful resources for his further study and research. It was a highly efficient

way to let him fetch more valuable details in a short period. The contents offered more abundant and related connections than his own research. Anyone can almost learn anything from just one click on their mobile phone. In a word, the respondents all mentioned that social media can improve their recognition level. Particularly, users can find all kinds of information in the niche field. The quality of the contents and information was satisfying. Moreover, a high recognition level has a correlation with maturity and intelligence. The respondents all thought they were smarter and more mature than their classmates.

3.3.6 Social Interactions

Social media users can find inspiration on how to connect and interact with people [10]. Introverted high school students can find their social interaction space on the Internet. All kinds of social media platforms offer them good interesting social hubs. Anyone can express themselves freely and make friends with strangers. Some students who have problem with interpersonal interactions can find their safe place on social media. One respondent (male, 16) mentioned his happiness when got likes for his posts.

However, certain interest social hub on social media also builds barriers for outsiders. One respondent (male, 15) mentioned a phenomenon that students formed little groups in school, the outsiders can't assimilate into the groups if they don't know certain buzzwords or gossip. Also, social on the Internet can't avoid negative comments. He thought the overreactions were caused by the fact netizens communicating behind the screens. So, their behaviors were not regulated and controlled.

4 Discussion

Through in-depth interviews, this research has learned social media's positive and negative influences on teenagers' psychosocial status subjectively, especially the impacts from short-form videos. High school adolescents use social media for multiple purposes on daily basis within certain time limits. When they are facing the negative contents or comments on social media apps, they have applied the emotional regulation strategies unconsciously, which benefiting to their relationships with social media. Also, in the process of the interviews, most of them have showed their own various specific ways to regulate their emotions.

Not as the same as the majority of parents and teachers think, social media does not only have negative effects on adolescents, but also has positive influences on them. From the perspectives of high school students' recognition level and social interaction skills, social media apps offer a large number of resources for personal needs, create a private and safe place for adolescents' social needs, and broaden the horizon in different aspects. Adolescent users are satisfied with these results. On the other hand, high school students who have the traits of neuroticism, and anxiety may have trouble in addiction and negative results when using social media.

This research matters to high school teachers, who can apply social media use to their education process, to parents, who can regulate and limit children's uses of social media to the best results, to policymakers, who can make rules and standards to monitor and manage the psychosocial status of adolescents, to social media applications, who can set rules and filtrate the contents with age limitations, etc. Moreover, it helps the public understand the benefits and drawbacks of using social media and prevent the stereotypes of it.

Social media apps, especially the short-form videos, have played an important role in high school students' daily life. It is urgent and necessary for the policy makers, social media platforms, parents, and schoolteachers to offer better uses of it and better experiences. Making the most out of social media is good for adolescents' development in all aspects.

5 Conclusion

With social media playing a bigger role in young people's everyday lives, especially the short-form videos, it is important to understand to what extent social media has affected their psychological and psychosocial well-being. This paper introduces the current psychological and psychosocial situation of high school students in urban areas of China, reveals and explains the benefits and drawbacks caused by social media uses, from the perspectives of emotional regulation disorder, neuroticism, addiction, dissatisfaction of life, recognition level and social interactions.

By interviewing respondents of their daily social media use among teenage boys and girls, this study found that social media use does not only have negative effects on adolescents, just as most of parents and schoolteachers presume. Using social media and watching short-form videos can improve teenagers' recognition levels, they have learnt what their interests are by searching related contents on short-form video platforms. At the same time, they absorb the wanting information and knowledge, also satisfy their need for broadening the horizon. Moreover, teenager's social interaction skill has been enhanced and improved by their use of social media applications. More introverted teenagers can find their safe social spaces on the Internet and fill in the blank of interacting with people in real life. To some extent, socializing online can offer certain topics and skills that they can apply in interpersonal interactions. For the drawbacks of using social media, lower life satisfaction and comparison with people on the Internet might be the biggest negative effect. Addiction don't bring too much attention in this study. It finds that high school students living in super big cities like Beijing have self-control in using social media platforms, and only a small number of teenagers have trouble with short-form video dependency. Their daily life schedule is full, busy with in-school study and extracurricular activities, they don't have too many spare times that can be arranged by themselves.

This paper puts forward the corresponding suggestions to allow teenagers to use social media, especially short-form videos, benefiting their psychological and psychosocial well-being to the most and prevent short-form video addiction. First, high school students should arrange rich and appealing schedule to fill daily lives, choose the right fit social media platforms to satisfy their use and gratification needs. Second, parents should teach teenagers how to regulate the emotions and guide them to watch short-form videos selectively, and lead the appropriate use. Third, schoolteachers should apply the use of social media in-class. Lastly, social media platforms should make restrictions for contents based on user's age, strictly have contents moderation for better quality short-form videos.

The limitations of this research fall into the respondents' demographic status and the data collection. Because of the time and space limits, this research only chose respondents from the urban areas of Beijing, China. It might have different results in the rural areas of China. Also, designing a research survey may help find out the correlations of each variation, and offer data analysis backups.

Future researchers can apply the results of this research together with further research on high school students' social needs and requests for updates of the functions of social media applications.

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