

The Impact of Short Videos Clips on the Socialization of Children in China

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Abstract: Socialization trends in society have already reached out to children, and the effect of socialization has become a concern for parents nowadays. The usage of Douyin, such short video clip application, among children in China increased over time. The aim of this study is to learn about the effects of short video clips on children's socialization. A case study with in-depth and semi-structured interviews was employed to understand the potential channels of this effect. Through the case study, the paper investigates what factors cause early socialization among children in China and the effect of early maturation that brings to children. This paper found that children's early maturity and socialization may be influenced by their intrinsic imitative behavior after observing new things, which could be explained by applying Tarde's Law of Imitation and Bandura's Social Learning Theory in the study. The paper also discussed the improvements and future studies on the topic.

Keywords: socialization, early-maturity, children, short videos clip

1. Introduction

Socialization's definition varies among disciplines. Austrian psychiatrist Alfred Adler described it as the method through which individuals grasp the customs of a specific society or group, enabling them to operate within it [1]. Socialization is an omnipresent process found in every corner of society, reaching not just adults but also adolescents and young children. Children, being in their formative years, undergo an accelerated form of socialization, especially noticeable in rapidly advancing times. While there are numerous pathways to achieve socialization, this paper is centered on examining the influence of short video clips. An emerging yet subtle trend is taking over, where a significant number of adults and adolescents are gravitating towards apps like Douyin, using them as a pastime. In scholarly realms, there's a vast body of research discussing the effects of short video clips on adolescent socialization. However, the realm of children's socialization through these clips remains relatively underexplored [2-3].

This paper delves into the influence of short video clips on the socialization of children, particularly those aged between 6 to 12 years. To obtain a comprehensive understanding of this subject, this paper employs both case study methodologies and in-depth paper analyses. These methods are deemed fit as they offer an intricate view of the potential impacts that short video clips might have on children's social development and behavior. Understanding this relationship is pivotal. It can equip experts, educators, and scholars with insights that might assist in mitigating any adverse effects arising from children's exposure to these clips. The negative ramifications of such exposure

might include skewed perceptions, distorted social interactions, or even hindered emotional growth. By shedding light on these areas, this paper aims not only to raise awareness but also to serve as a valuable resource for other researchers delving into the domain of children's socialization and media's role in it.

2. Background of Chinese Children Socialization

Over the past few decades, China has experienced an unparalleled economic surge, as a result of adjustments in economic and social policies. This economic growth has profoundly transformed the lifestyles of the Chinese populace. However, alongside these beneficial shifts, certain challenges have also emerged within society. In particular, the rapid societal changes have had implications for children's mental well-being, educational experiences, and their overall personal development [4]. Many experts and scholars have found the early maturity phenomenon, which has become a heated discussion among society [5-6]. They argue that children's early maturity should be attributed to the snackable lifestyle of this era, in which, short video clips have been the most representative. Moreover, some newspapers and analyses also have found that children nowadays spend a large amount of time watching Douyin and Kuaishou. Among the monthly active users of the Douyin app, users under the age of 18 accounted for 6.7%, reaching 32.56 million [7]. While the Douyin app has set a time limit for its underage users, many of these users choose to access the app alongside their parents. This has raised concerns among parents, as the content of the videos that children are exposed to seems to be increasingly mature. Such exposure might affect their speech patterns, lifestyle choices, and even their academic performance, particularly during their elementary school years. Concurrently, the early onset of socialization through such platforms can usher in stress and anxiety, heightened by the burgeoning realization of peer pressure. Continuously watching short videos in a static posture can inhibit physical activity, which isn't beneficial for the proper muscular and skeletal development of young users [8]. Children may also have more risk-taking behavior which causes negative consequences such as injuries and so on. It is important for children to form good learning habits and build foundations for their cognitive abilities.

The growing environment of Chinese children tends to be harsher and live under deep pressure [9-10]. By facing the pressure from Zhongkao and Gaokao tests during secondary school and high school, the time for Chinese children to have fun and entertain has automatically become less than children in other countries [11]. According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information, the highest total daily outside time was reported by children in South Africa (3.70 1.86 h/day) and Brazil (3.46 1.96 h/day), while the lowest total daily outdoor time was recorded by children in Portugal (1.75 0.86 h/day) and China (1.87 1.09 h/day) [12]. For Chinese children, Douyin is an easy-accessible entertainment and becomes an outlet for relieving their daily stress. Due to this characteristic of Douyin and Kuaishou, these types of applications perhaps have the most significant impact on Chinese children.

3. Methodology

This study employs a case study approach to investigate the root causes of early socialization and the implications of early maturation on Chinese children. Through in-depth and semi-structured interviews, the research aims to uncover the underlying mechanisms through which these influences might take shape.

3.1. Sample and Data

The subject of this case study is an 11-year-old girl referred to as Julie (a pseudonym) who is enrolled in an elementary school in urban Shanghai. She has been a consistent performer academically,

securing high grades and actively participating in various school activities. However, Julie's parents have noted that since the onset of the pandemic, she has developed an increasing affinity for short video clips, which has begun to influence her daily routines. After obtaining consent from both her parents and Julie herself, she agreed to be a part of this study. Data collection will commence once the research design is finalized.

3.2. Research Design

For this study, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary data collection method. The interview took place on a Sunday afternoon at Julie's residence in urban Shanghai. Distinct questions were curated for both Julie and her parents.

For Julie, the study inquired about:

- a. *The daily frequency of her Douyin usage and the total time she spends on the app.*
- b. *Her preferred categories of content on Douyin and her rationale for such preferences.*
- c. *The specific aspects of Douyin that captivated her attention.*
- d. *Whether she found herself emulating the behaviors and vernacular presented in Douyin content.*

The paper also presented Julie's parents with a set of questions:

- a. *Whether they observed any changes in Julie's communication patterns with family and friends.*
- b. *How they would compare Julie's behavior and socialization patterns before and after her introduction to TikTok (Douyin).*
- c. *Their foremost concerns regarding the potential impacts of the app on Julie.*

3.3. Result

Through the interview, Julie and her parents answered these questions respectively. Julie responded that she watched Douyin approximately two hours per day, usually after dinner and homework. There isn't a specific genre that she is most interested in, among all the videos, she frequently related to lifestyle and pop culture, and sometimes humor videos as well. She said that although she couldn't understand some of the content in the videos, the props and colors that were used in these videos attracted her. Also, she enjoys the hot-trended music and dances performed by influencers in Douyin as well. While watching Douyin, Julie had always maintained a good mood and felt that the pressure accumulated from school was relieved. She didn't notice that she would mimic the entire way that people talk in the video, but some words or phrases that she would absorb and use in her daily life. She also mentioned that her classmates also use Douyin, so she felt happy that she could have some common topics with them.

Julie's mother claimed that she sometimes found that Julie would say some words that she wasn't familiar with, and she thought these were internet slang. Julie sometimes used language that was similar to her language system, and this really shocked her. She would sometimes ask questions related to society even in the political field as well. Julie's father agreed with the point that Julie talks more and more like an adult. Because she only got chances after eating dinner and finishing homework, her homework quality decreased since she could not fully concentrate on her worksheets. Before being exposed to Douyin, she could focus on her homework all the time until she was finished. When Julie and her parents were sitting in the car, they chose to listen to the radio, but after touching this app, Julie wanted to listen to pop music in Douyin more often. Julie's mom talked about her concerns that Julie will not be able to concentrate properly on anything, because children are active by nature and often tend to direct their attention to unrelated targets or in many different directions at the same time. In addition, her dad is concerned that people have much less time and experience in real human interactions and are prone to the degradation of verbal and communicative skills.

4. The Effect of Douyin on Children's Socialization

Based on the result, it is indicated that child socialization is significantly influenced by short video clips. Through interviews with Julie and her parents, this paper revealed that children's behaviors and perceptions have changed significantly since they started spending time on short video apps in previous years. These changes are reflected in ways of early maturity, by measuring the change in speaking habits, concentration level, and daily life change. The possible channels of how this impact is exerted could be explained by Gabriel Tard's law of Imitation and Bandura's social learning theory.

In Tarde's law of imitation, Tarde believed that all human behavior is imitation, that imitation is innate, and that people keep their behavior consistent by imitating each other and not following up on expanding social similarities [13]. He believed that the most basic law of imitation in social life is the law of logical imitation. Tarde also argued that "innovations proposed or accepted by the upper classes spread easily to the lower classes because the lower classes always felt the prestige of the upper classes" [14].

In Bandura's social learning theory, not all forms of learning could be accounted for by direct reinforcement. A large portion of human behavior is taught through observation and example. By watching others, one forms an understanding of how the new behavior is carried out, and subsequently, this coded knowledge serves as a guide to action [15]. Bandura believes that people either observe behavior directly via encounters with other people in social settings or indirectly through media. Rewarded behavior is more likely to be imitated, whereas discouraged behavior is avoided. In Bandura's study, kids saw an adult behave violently towards a Bobo doll. When the kids were eventually permitted to play with the Bobo doll in a room, they started acting aggressively like what they had seen [16].

In Julie's case, when she is watching Douyin, she is exposed to front of abundant amount of information that is new and fresh to her. As Tarde said, imitation is innate, children will automatically imitate the new thing they have seen. She watches a lot every day, and the more she watches, the more information she receives and absorbs. The content she receives also becomes cluttered. At the personality level, imitation is always motivated by an internal desire to resemble the subject of the imitation. Children are interested in everything in the adult world, and watching Douyin gives them access to the adult world where they aspire to be. Children here are considered as the lower class in society, so when looking at things that are relatively "superior" and are naturally filled with admiration and the urge to imitate them. So, Julie sings pop songs and talks like an adult because such behavior makes her feel cool.

In Bandura's experiment, children will imitate things that they observe. When the children saw their parents treat the doll violently, they couldn't distinguish whether or not the behavior was good or bad, so they would just follow what they had seen. This is why Bandura's social learning theory emphasizes the importance of role models in the process of human socialization. There is too much information about both the good and the bad mixed in with Douyin, and as children observed all of them while watching the app, they unconsciously learned these new behaviors. Later in their daily life, when Julie and her friends are socializing with each other, they gradually bring out these behaviors which learned from the internet.

5. Conclusion

The research discusses the factors that lead to early socialization and the effects that early maturation has on children in China. This study employed semi-structured interviews and found that children's socialization and early maturity may be driven by their innate imitation after observation of new things. However, the study is not out of limitation. First, the sample size in this case study is limited. One limitation of the case study is that it is inappropriate to make an empirical generalization based

on only Julie's case. Julie as a sample can be a special case in the situation and, thus may not be able to be generalized in the targeted population. Future research can conduct surveys and collect relevant quantitative data to study if this effect is statistically significant so that it can be empirically generalized.

Second, in the case study, Julie comes from Shanghai. However, children in urban and rural areas may be varied in socialization processes and behaviors. Some studies suggest that short-form video apps may have a greater impact on children in North China and rural areas. In future studies, researchers should focus on different cases in decentralized areas within China, searching about children's attitudes and socialization in rural areas compared to urban areas.

Third, the questions that have been asked in the case study also need to be scrutinized as well. Because the problem is self-designed, it has not been supported by a large number of other studies to verify its reliability.

However, this study still contributes to the current knowledge of child socialization and the impact of short video clips by putting forward a hypothesis regarding the pathways of this influence. In order to apply this research, short-form video companies should develop policies that prohibit the use of big data models to place content regardless of age. Protecting children's physical and mental health so they can grow up healthy and happy.

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