

The Influence of Media on Adolescent Mental Health: A Case Study of Fandom Couple Pairing Culture

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Abstract: Adolescence is a critical period for the development of an individual's mental health and an important stage for personal growth and knowledge accumulation. During this period, adolescents often show a keen interest in various things, information, or knowledge. In an era of information explosion, the media, as one of the main channels for information dissemination, has an important impact on the mental health of adolescents. As one of the current niche cultures with a relatively wide range of communication, CP culture helps social and emotional communication, but also raises concerns about mistrust in real-life intimate relationships. Therefore, it is crucial to raise awareness of CP culture and promote healthy communication strategies among adolescents. This paper explores the psychological impact of the widespread popularity of CP culture among adolescents. Through a literature review and case study, this paper examines the positive and negative effects of CP culture on adolescents' social and emotional development. This paper uses the widespread CP (Coupling/Character Pairing) culture as an example to discuss its impact on adolescents' mental health. This paper examines the research findings through case studies and comparative analysis, revealing that while the television media and other media promote the social, emotional and cognitive development of adolescents, they also bring potential risks, such as the negative effects of promoting violence, pornography and abuse. Therefore, effective intervention and management strategies must be developed to strengthen cooperation between families and schools, or strengthen media regulation to mitigate potential harm.

Keywords: Media impact, CP culture, Mental Health, Adolescence.

1. Introduction

Adolescence represents a crucial period for individual psychological development, with television media playing an increasingly significant role in contemporary society. Media formats exhibit a vast diversity, broadly categorized into traditional and new media. Traditional media, encompassing newspapers, magazines, radio, and television, play pivotal roles in information dissemination, each with their unique transmission modes and characteristics. In contrast, new media are emerging forms based on digital technology, leveraging channels such as the Internet and mobile communications for information dissemination. Examples include WeChat, QQ, Weibo, blogs, Internet television, online radio, online games, and digital television.

The forms of information disseminated by media also demonstrate diversity. Traditional media like newspapers primarily rely on text and images, while radio primarily communicates through sound. Television, on the other hand, integrates sound, images, and videos, offering a multifaceted experience. New media further enrich information formats, encompassing not only text, images, and videos but also audio, animations, live streams, and short videos, thereby rendering information dissemination more vivid, intuitive, and abundant.

Media's impact on individuals is multifaceted. Media diversity provides a plethora of information sources, exposing people to knowledge from diverse fields and perspectives, thereby broadening horizons and enhancing knowledge reserves. Different media formats and content profoundly influence individuals' thinking patterns. For instance, textual information emphasizes logical and rational thinking, whereas images and videos emphasize intuitive feelings and emotional experiences. This diversified presentation of information fosters cognitive patterns.

The emergence of new media forms like social media has transformed social interaction. People can maintain connections with distant friends and share aspects of their lives, yet they may also confront issues such as cyberbullying and privacy breaches. Television media, as a fundamental component of traditional media, holds a paramount position in the media landscape. Long regarded as a primary channel for information dissemination, television combines sound, images, and videos to convey news, education, entertainment, and other types of information vividly and efficiently, catering to the information needs of a vast audience. This mode of transmission boasts broad coverage and swift speed, enabling the rapid dissemination of crucial information to a wide audience.

With the advancement of technology and the diversification of media forms, the impact of television media on the mental health of young people has attracted widespread attention, especially the impact of CP culture. CP culture is an acronym for "Coupling" or "Role Pairing," which refers to the phenomenon in which fans perceive two characters (of the same or opposite sex, or other fictional gender classifications) as a pair [1].

This article explores in depth the positive and negative effects of television media on the mental health of adolescents, and proposes corresponding recommendations and strategies. It also explores the positive and negative effects of CP culture on the social and emotional development of adolescents through literature reviews and case studies. The aim is to propose content recommendations for promoting media normalization and countermeasures for addressing the impact of media on adolescents through comparative analysis and case studies.

2. Effect of Television Media on Adolescent Mental Health

2.1. Positive Effects

2.1.1. Providing Information and Educational Opportunities

Television media can provide adolescents with abundant information and educational resources, broaden their horizons and knowledge, and promote cognitive development and learning growth. According to the survey, the media that have a greater impact on adolescents' study and life are network (63.2%), television (52.5%), newspapers and magazines (20.1%), and radio (9.3%) [2]. Adolescents obtain information from television second only to the Internet. In general, adolescents use media to acquire knowledge and information.

2.1.2. Potentially Enhancing Adolescent Self-Value, Identity Formation, and Choice

Television programs often showcase diverse social values and role models. Adolescents encounter character depictions from different cultural backgrounds, professions, genders, and races, each associated with distinct values. Through these portrayals, adolescents can begin to contemplate and

compare different values, gradually forming their own perspectives. By witnessing characters they identify with overcoming challenges and achieving goals, adolescents can learn how to navigate similar situations, thereby enhancing their self-awareness and self-worth. Certain television programs may explore themes such as personal growth, family relationships, and friendships, profoundly influencing adolescent development. The portrayal of how characters handle challenges and establish positive interactions in interpersonal relationships can motivate adolescents to explore their inner and outer worlds actively.

2.2. Negative Effects of Media on Adolescent Mental Health

2.2.1. Violence and Pornographic Content

Some media content may include violence, pornography, and other harmful information that negatively impacts adolescent psychology, leading to aggressive behavior and distorted sexual attitudes. Driven by the need to attract audiences, digital platforms, television, and magazines increasingly feature open dissemination of sexual content. Reports related to sex can be found in a variety of entertainment newspapers and magazines [3]. The internet is also inundated with various pornographic texts, explicit images, and videos, exerting a negative impact on the values of adolescents. Prolonged exposure to pornographic content can potentially lead to negative emotions such as anxiety, shame, and depression among adolescents. They may develop unnecessary concerns and confusions about their sexual behaviors and orientations. Moreover, long-term exposure to pornographic content can dilute the moral values of adolescents, causing them to blur the boundaries of right and wrong, misunderstand and misconstrue relationships related to sexuality and interpersonal connections, thereby triggering a series of social problems. Adolescents who excessively rely on online pornographic content may reduce their communication and interaction with peers in real life, resulting in diminished social skills and strained interpersonal relationships.

2.2.2. False Information and Social Comparisons

The proliferation of false information and excessively curated, glamorous lifestyles on social media platforms poses a significant risk to the self-perception and emotional well-being of adolescents. In this digital age, where likes, shares, and follower counts have become quasi-currency, young individuals are constantly bombarded with idealized representations of life that often bear little resemblance to reality.

This relentless exposure to curated content, often devoid of context or nuance, can foster an unrealistic benchmark for success, beauty, and happiness. Adolescents, who are still navigating their identities and developing a sense of self-worth, may struggle to reconcile these artificial ideals with their own lived experiences. The resulting cognitive dissonance can lead to a distorted self-image, where they perceive themselves as inadequate or unworthy compared to the hyper-filtered versions of others' lives [4].

Furthermore, the constant comparison and the pressure to conform to these unattainable standards can foster feelings of inferiority and anxiety within adolescents. They may become preoccupied with their physical appearance, achievements, and social status, constantly seeking validation from external sources rather than internalizing a sense of self-acceptance and satisfaction. In extreme cases, this can manifest as body image issues, low self-esteem, or even depression, all of which can have long-lasting impacts on their mental health and overall development.

Therefore, it is imperative for educators, parents, and society at large to raise awareness about the potential harms of social media and to encourage a more balanced, nuanced approach to online engagement that prioritizes authenticity, empathy, and self-compassion.

2.2.3. Affects social behavior

Adolescents who indulge in television programs for extended periods may reduce their face-to-face communication time with peers. They tend to prefer acquiring information and entertainment through screens rather than establishing interpersonal relationships through actual social activities. This could lead to a decline in their social skills in real life, manifesting as difficulties in communication and weakened expression abilities. Furthermore, the idealized lifestyles and virtual social relationships portrayed in television media may impact adolescents' social values. They may excessively pursue the perfect images and lifestyles depicted on TV, neglecting the interpersonal relationships and social values present in real life. Consequently, they may exhibit unrealistic expectations and attitudes in social interactions, thereby affecting their social outcomes. Amid the trend of media convergence, the ways of watching television programs have become increasingly diverse, such as through the internet and mobile devices. While this convenience offers more entertainment options, it may also lead to adolescents' excessive reliance on screen entertainment, thereby reducing their willingness to participate in real-life social activities. They may prefer watching television programs alone rather than engaging in social activities with others [5]

3. Case - Fandom Couple Pairing Culture on Adolescent Psychological Health

3.1. Influence of Television Programs under Fandom Couple Pairing Culture on Social Patterns

Against the backdrop of CP culture's prevalence, certain television programs, particularly reality shows, emphasize friendships among their participants, fostering a sense of camaraderie and mutual understanding among peers. Some programs highlight niche interests, such as opera and musical theatre, dedicating significant segments to showcasing friendly relationships and shared aspirations among members [6].

These displays may influence the social interactions of adolescents. According to the Observational learning theory, acquisition of complex behaviors solely through observing the actions and outcomes of others (role models), also known as vicarious learning or learning without trial [5]. Adolescents tend to imitate the behavior of their idols through observation and learning. They may learn different social skills, modes of expression, and concepts of friendship. The positive social model and values presented in TV program, where "everyone can find like-minded companions," may inspire adolescents to emulate such behavior. Adolescents may gain a broader understanding of certain circles, being attracted to the communities depicted in the program and seeking to join new social circles to make new friends [7].

3.2. Influence on adolescents' views on relationships

Audience exhibit great enthusiasm and curiosity for CP culture. Hence, many programs deliberately promote these relationships for economic gain. Since the broadcast of so many tv program, numerous discussions on CP culture in the program flood social media platforms and remaining highly active. Moreover, some members, in pursuit of higher attention, deliberately engage in behavior that sparks imagination.

Some members used threatening expressions to characterize the so-called male competition against other members during the prescribed process of choosing a partner on a television program. As well, some members have created the illusion of intimacy through intimate behaviors on the show for the sake of the show's effect and self-interest, including getting marriage certificates, promoting exclusive songs, advocating kissing, and other behaviors [7].

This deliberate creation of an ambiguous atmosphere may have certain implications for the audience, particularly adolescents, affecting their views on partner selection and even their sexual orientation. According to the observation learning theory mentioned earlier, teenagers tend to imitate their observed behaviors, especially on the basis of idol worship, as they are more likely to imitate the behavior of their idols. Through the verification of the Bobo doll experiment, children who observe rewarded violent behavior will try to imitate in order to obtain rewards. Similarly, Teenage viewers of tv programs can gain a large number of viewers and love when they see CP, making it easier for them to develop same-sex relationships. Additionally, Erikson's stage of personality development indicates that, this stage signifies the transitional phase from childhood to adolescence, characterized by the search for identity [8]. This stage is inherently viewed as a period of identity exploration. During this crucial phase of identity formation in childhood, significant exposure to CP culture may potentially influence the process of self-identity exploration. Under the CP culture, situations in the program where same-sex companions or lovers are created could potentially lead adolescents to develop more interest in same-sex relationships and lean towards developing intimate relationships with the same sex.

3.3. Decreased trust in intrinsic relationships

According to the Projection effect, Projection entails individuals attributing their own faults or socially unacceptable desires to others (also known as denial of projection), occurring at a subconscious level [4]. Psychological projection serves as a defense mechanism aimed at alleviating anxiety and safeguarding the self to maintain internal integrity. Fans cultivated by the CP culture of the TV program are susceptible to projecting their own thoughts onto the program's members, potentially imbuing otherwise ordinary interactions with ambiguous meanings in their perception [9-10]. Many viewers project excessive emotions into the virtual CP relationships portrayed in the program.

However, as mentioned earlier, these are artificially created relationships for the sake of gaining attention, and after the program ends, these members return to their normal lives. At this point, a considerable portion of fans and viewers may experience a sense of disillusionment, leading to mistrust in intimate relationships.

4. Recommendations

Families and schools should jointly monitor adolescents' media usage, establish a healthy media environment both at home and in educational settings, and guide adolescents to use media rationally. Enhance media literacy education for adolescents to improve their discernment abilities and critical thinking skills, enabling them to utilize media resources in a more rational and healthy manner. Government, industry, and society should enhance regulation and self-discipline regarding media content to reduce the dissemination of harmful information and safeguard the psychological health of adolescents.

5. Conclusion

This paper delves into the extensive influence of media, particularly television media, on the mental health of adolescents. By taking the specific case of "CP culture" (Character Pairing), it provides an in-depth analysis of the prevalence of this cultural phenomenon among adolescents and its positive and negative impacts on their social, emotional, and cognitive development. The paper emphasizes that adolescence represents a pivotal stage for individual mental health and personal growth, where media, as a primary channel for information dissemination, plays a crucial role. Television media offers adolescents abundant information and educational resources, thereby broadening their horizons

and fostering cognitive development and learning. Through the portrayal of characters in television programs, adolescents can shape their own values and identities, enhancing self-awareness and self-esteem.

However, the paper also acknowledges that some media content encompasses harmful elements such as violence and pornography, which negatively affect adolescents' mental health, potentially leading to aggressive behaviors and distorted sexual attitudes. Furthermore, the proliferation of false information and overly curated lifestyles on social media platforms impacts adolescents' self-perception and emotional well-being, fostering unrealistic expectations and anxiety. Prolonged television viewing may also reduce face-to-face communication, affecting social skills and expression abilities, and causing a detachment from real-life social values.

Despite the insights presented, this paper recognizes several areas for improvement. While it cites some survey data and case studies, the overall quantitative research support is relatively weak. Future studies could collect more specific and quantifiable data through large-scale questionnaires and experimental designs to strengthen the conclusions. Additionally, the paper's focus on Chinese adolescents limits its cross-cultural applicability. Future research should expand to different countries and regions to explore the potential variations in media reception and reactions among adolescents from diverse cultural backgrounds. Moreover, while some cases are discussed, a deeper analysis of typical cases could provide a more concrete understanding of the specific pathways and mechanisms through which media influences adolescent mental health.

Building upon this preliminary exploration of media's impact on adolescent mental health, the author suggests several directions for future research. Firstly, a more nuanced examination of different media types (e.g., social media, online games, short videos) and their specific effects on adolescent mental health could inform more targeted intervention strategies. Secondly, cross-cultural comparative studies across national boundaries would contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the similarities and differences in media's influence on adolescents within different cultural contexts, informing the development of global policies for adolescent media protection. Lastly, research into the collaboration between families and schools in guiding adolescents' healthy media use could mitigate negative impacts and promote their holistic development.

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