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Social Media Use and Adolescent Mental Health: Mediating and Moderating Roles of Parenting Practices and a Critical Reflection on Existing Research Paradigms from a Family-Education Perspective

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Abstract. In the era of mobile Internet, social media is deeply involved in teenagers' daily life. The same media use behavior will bring different psychological consequences. Family education is regarded as a key influencing factor by many studies. Using the method of literature research, this paper combs the empirical research of journals and dissertations at home and abroad, and analyzes the mediating and regulating effects of different parenting modes, media parenting, and parents' bow behavior on Teenagers' social media use and mental health. This paper not only summarizes the existing research consensus, but also critically reflects on the limitations of the existing research paradigm: most studies tend to the ideal family model, there are causal inference problems, and there is insufficient explanation for the contradictory mixed family that is widespread in reality. The study found that authoritative parenting has psychological buffering effect, but it is not a "panacea"; The effect of media parenting is not simply divided by "restriction/guidance". The negotiation process of rules and the background of parent-child relationship are the key; It is difficult to resolve the internal psychological dilemma simply relying on the control of hard equipment. This study suggests that the psychological risk of teenagers' social media can not be completely attributed to family education, which can provide a reflection reference for family media education and subsequent related research.

Keywords: Parenting styles, media parenting, social media use, adolescent mental health.

1. Introduction

Social media has become an important carrier for contemporary teenagers to socialize, access information, leisure and entertainment. Media can not only expand the social boundary of teenagers, but also give birth to psychological problems such as online comparison and social anxiety. It is worth noting that the existing empirical research has repeatedly observed a phenomenon: in the face of almost the same network environment, different teenagers' psychological impact varies greatly [1, 2]. A large number of literatures attribute this individual difference to parental rearing, which leads

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to a set of mainstream views: authoritative rearing with positive media guidance is the optimal solution, and strict regulatory rearing will only intensify the reaction.

But when this ideal model is compared with the real family situation, many contradictions will be exposed: in reality, few families can continue to achieve complete high warmth and high rules; Many parents want to actively communicate, but it is difficult to achieve due to objective conditions such as work pressure; Even if some teenagers grow up in authoritative families, they will still have psychological problems due to social media. Based on the above realistic tension, this study is not simply repeating the conclusions of various empirical studies, but based on second-hand literature, which not only needs to clarify the path of action among parenting, social media and mental health, but also needs to analyze the shortcomings and limitations of existing research. This study uses the literature analysis method to collect and study the empirical literature at home and abroad and longitudinal tracking research results. The advantage of this method is that it can horizontally compare the consensus and contradiction between different studies and discriminate the applicable boundary of the research conclusion. The goal of this paper is to clarify the internal logic of the role of parenting in mediating and regulating, reflect on the gap between the existing ideal model and the real family, and finally put forward the Enlightenment under the realistic constraints, rather than the output of the ideal family slogan.

2. Theoretical basis and literature review

2.1. Definition of core concepts

Parental rearing patterns refer to the collection of stable attitudes and behaviors in the long-term rearing process of parents. The academic community generally divides them into four types: authoritative type, autocratic type, indulgent type and neglect type [2]. Authoritative education represents emotional care and reasonable rules; The autocratic type is dominated by high-pressure orders and lacks emotional response; Indulgence, emphasis on material supply but lack of behavioral constraints; The neglect type is lack of emotional companionship and behavior supervision.

Media education is a concept derived from the Internet era, which is divided into positive media education and restrictive media education [3, 4]. Positive media education emphasizes parent-child communication and common discrimination of network information risks; Restrictive media education includes limiting the length of Internet access, confiscating electronic equipment and other constraints. Many existing reviews simply divide the two into "good and bad", but some empirical results suggest that the effect of the two can not be judged independently from the background of parent-child relationship. Parents' bow behavior belongs to recessive upbringing, which means that when parents get along with their children, parents indulge in mobile phones and ignore their children, and will imperceptibly shape teenagers' media behavior habits through observation and imitation [5, 6].

Teenagers' social media use can be divided into benign use and problematic use. Benign use for social interaction and access to learning resources; Problematic use, including excessive content skimming, staying up late to surf the Internet, and online comparison, does not necessarily reach clinical addiction, but has interfered with normal learning and life [7, 8]. Social platforms' upward social comparison and online self repressive expression will further induce psychological stress [9]. The mental health of adolescents referred to in this paper not only represents the absence of mental illness, but also focuses on comprehensive psychological adaptability, including self-esteem, anxiety and depression, social anxiety, and the ability to handle negative information on the Internet [10,

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11]. The change of self-esteem in the social media environment is an important observation index [1].

2.2. Theoretical basis

Social cognitive theory suggests that adolescents' behavior acquisition comes not only from oral preaching, but also from the observation and imitation of parents' behavior. This can explain the intergenerational transmission of parents' bow behavior, and also explain how family concepts shape teenagers' cognition of the Internet [3, 5]. The ecosystem theory regards the family as the most important micro environment for teenagers. The same network negative information has completely different psychological effects under different family atmosphere, which also explains the boundary conditions of social media influence [10]. The theory also suggests that the family is not a closed system, and the parenting behavior within the family will also be constrained by external social and economic conditions, so the family cannot be viewed in isolation. Network loss compensation hypothesis: when the emotional needs of teenagers in real families are not met, they will turn to virtual networks to seek emotional comfort, so as to escape the real pressure and explain the intrinsic motivation of some teenagers' addiction to social media.

2.3. Foreign related research

The empirical research on the relationship between the three was carried out earlier in foreign countries. Steinberg proved that authoritative parenting has a moderating buffer effect, which can weaken the damage of social media overuse on self-esteem, but the protective effect is only a buffer, which does not mean that it can completely isolate the psychological damage caused by the network [1]. Based on a three-year longitudinal follow-up study, Valkenbury et al. Found that positive media parenting can improve teenagers' social self-efficacy and maintain their mental health [3]. Restrictive media parenting can only reduce some high-risk Internet behaviors, but it cannot directly improve internal emotions. Livingstone and Helsper pointed out that warm communication families can reduce the risk of using social media for teenagers' problems, but the study also suggested that not all restrictions will bring negative results, and the network rules established through mutual negotiation still have positive value, and only sudden and unilateral mandatory control are more likely to lead to rebellion [4]. Baumrind's study found that authoritarian and laissez faire upbringing are more likely to lead to the use of risk media, and self-esteem can partially buffer the negative effects of poor upbringing [7]. Liu et al. Carried out foreign language empirical research on Chinese teenagers, proving that positive media parenting plays an intermediary role between parenting style and Internet addiction [8]. Tian et al. Confirmed that the parenting Association predicts social anxiety through online social comparison and the parallel mediation path of true self-expression [9]. However, most of the foreign samples come from European and American cultural backgrounds, and the conclusion cannot be directly transplanted to the domestic youth groups.

2.4. Relevant domestic research

In China, quantitative questionnaires and longitudinal follow-up studies are mainly used. Ding Qian and others confirmed through cross lag research that parents' bow behavior can positively predict the subsequent junior high school students' mobile phone addiction, highlighting the practical significance of family education [5]. Domestic scholars have explored multiple local mediation paths: Guo Li and others have verified the chain mediation effect of anxiety and depression between

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positive parenting and Internet addiction [2]. Zhan et al. and Liu and Li explained the process of action from the perspective of cognitive emotion regulation and self elasticity respectively [11, 12]. Tang et al. conducted intermediary analysis in combination with local filial piety beliefs, which is a perspective rarely involved in foreign research [13]. Yu pointed out that the degree of family cohesion and family conflict will also affect teenagers' Internet dependence [10]. The existing samples in China are mainly urban middle school students, and the empirical research on rural and left behind adolescents is relatively limited.

2.5. Research review

Based on the literature at home and abroad, the academic community has formed a basic consensus: parenting can not only directly affect teenagers' social media behavior, but also change the impact of media on mental health as a moderator variable, and also have an indirect effect through multiple paths of emotion, self-control and online cognition. However, the existing research system has three limitations that can not be ignored, which is also the focus of this paper.

First, the dilemma of causal inference. The vast majority of studies are cross-sectional questionnaires, which can only prove that the variables are related, and it is difficult to determine the causal direction. The existing literature generally presupposes the one-way logic of "parenting styles \rightarrow social media psychological problems", but the reality is completely opposite: when teenagers have psychological problems caused by social media, parents feel pressure and turn to more stringent control. The existing cross-sectional data are difficult to distinguish whether ring parenting causes network psychological problems or whether children's network dilemma has changed parents' parenting strategies. Only a few longitudinal studies can partially avoid this problem [3, 5].

Second, the idealization of the classification of upbringing types is out of touch with reality. Empirical studies generally use the four ideal categories of authority, autocracy, laissez faire and neglect, but in reality, the vast majority of ordinary families belong to the mixed type of education, sometimes warm communication, sometimes strict control. However, no matter at home or abroad, the specialized research on this most common family model is very rare, and the explanatory power of the ideal classification model for real families is limited [13]. At the same time, many literatures shape "authoritative parenting" as a universal template, but ignore Steinberg's research conclusion: authoritative parenting is only a buffer, which can not completely isolate the psychological harm of social media [1].

Third, the dual simplification of media education. Many reviews directly draw a simple conclusion that "guidance is good, restriction is bad", but Livingstone and Helsper suggest that the key to the effect of restrictive media education is not "whether to restrict", but whether the rules are negotiated between parents and children and what kind of parent-child relationship is based on [4]. Unilateral compulsory prohibition will intensify contradictions, but the network rules jointly negotiated still have a protective effect. Many existing literatures directly and completely deny the restrictive means, and there is a problem of simplifying the conclusion.

In addition, most studies regard the family as a closed unit, and place the responsibility for teenagers' network psychological problems on the parents' personal ability, but rarely discuss the external structural constraints: Contemporary parents face the objective reality of long working hours and high survival pressure, many families are difficult to maintain the ideal education mode of "high warmth+high response" for a long time, and can not simply attribute the failure of the ideal mode to the parents' misconceptions. At the same time, the existing research accounts for less discussion on the responsibility of schools and network platforms.

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3. Research on parental rearing patterns, social media use and mental health

The impact of social media on teenagers is twofold. Moderate use can expand social contact and obtain peer support, but high-frequency online comparison and excessive immersion will bring about upward social comparison, induce social anxiety, low self-esteem and other problems [1, 9]. Family upbringing constitutes an important boundary condition, but this condition is only a buffer barrier, not an absolute shield. Even in authoritative families, teenagers are still likely to suffer psychological damage caused by social media [1]. Authoritative families give consideration to emotional support and rules, and prefer to adopt negotiated media parenting. The risk of teenagers' problematic social media use is relatively lower; Authoritarian families often adopt unilateral compulsory control, which is easy to induce teenagers' behavior of secretly surfing the Internet and rebellious escape; The indulgent family lacks behavior boundaries, and teenagers are more likely to use social software without restraint; The neglect type family lacks emotional response, and teenagers tend to turn to the Internet for emotional sustenance [4, 7, 10]. Parents' bow behavior is a hidden factor that is easy to ignore. Longitudinal studies have confirmed that parents' addiction to mobile phones during parent-child company will increase the risk of subsequent teenagers' mobile phone addiction, but this problem has not been paid attention to in many families [5, 6].

Parenting also has a direct effect on Teenagers' mental health. Families with warm emotions are more conducive to cultivating teenagers' emotional regulation and self-control ability; Negative upbringing, such as autocracy, neglect and doting, is more likely to lead to negative psychological states such as anxiety and social tension [2, 12]. There are many conflicts within the family and the degree of intimacy is low. The probability of teenagers' psychological distress and network dependence will increase significantly [10]. It should be noted that the above conclusions are statistical trends at the group level, and there will be a large number of individual exceptions in a single family, which cannot be directly used to judge the quality of a family.

4. Integration analysis of the mechanism of parental rearing patterns

Authoritative parenting plays a moderating and buffering role, and emotional support provided by families can weaken self-esteem impairment and anxiety caused by social media comparison and negative information [1]. However, the protection is not absolute. When teenagers encounter major academic blow, peer injury and other external events, the buffering effect will also decline. Authoritarian, laissez faire and neglectful families lack this layer of protection, and teenagers lack emotional outlets in reality, so it is easy to place all their emotions on the network, amplifying the psychological damage caused by network setbacks [4, 7]. Many parents have cognitive misconceptions that as long as the strict control of mobile devices can protect their psychology, but longitudinal studies have proved that it is difficult to change teenagers' internal emotional cognition simply by restricting external behavior [3].

The first is the emotional chain mediation path. Bad upbringing is easy to induce negative emotions such as anxiety and depression. Some teenagers will use social media to escape from real pain and further aggravate psychological distress; Positive parenting can alleviate negative emotions and reduce teenagers' motivation to escape from reality by relying on the Internet [2]. Secondly, parenting shapes teenagers' cognitive emotion regulation ability. In a bad parenting environment, teenagers are more likely to form non adaptive emotional coping styles. When they are under pressure, they can brush short videos and decompress them, forming a vicious circle [11, 12]. In addition, parenting affects adolescents' self-control and social self-efficacy. Adolescents who are understood and supported have better self-discipline ability and can independently manage social

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media use; Negative upbringing will weaken self-control and is difficult to resist the temptation of the network environment [3]. At the same time, the practice of media education will undertake the positive effect of authoritative education; Bad parenting environment will promote teenagers to make upward social comparison on social platforms, suppress real self-expression, and induce social anxiety [9]. Finally, domestic research suggests that parenting also operates through culturally specific psychological variables, such as filial piety cognition, highlighting the need to consider contextual differences when applying findings from European and American research [13]. Comprehensive empirical research shows that media parenting cannot simply be judged by the duality of "guidance is superior to restriction". Active media education, based on equal communication, jointly discriminates network risks and takes into account behavioral constraints and psychological ability training, is a more ideal choice [8]. However, restrictive media parenting itself is not completely harmful: if the rules are agreed by parents and children, it can play a role in avoiding high-risk network behavior; However, if it is unilateral compulsory confiscation and peeking at chat records, and the lack of communication basis, it will intensify parent-child conflicts and give birth to children's covert online behavior [4]. In reality, many families directly choose compulsory control, essentially skipping the negotiation process and only implementing restrictive measures, which leads to negative results, rather than all the mistakes in the behavior of "restriction".

It is worth adding that the vast majority of existing literatures regard parenting as a pre independent variable and rarely discuss the two-way cycle: the behavioral changes brought about by teenagers' social media will in turn change parents' parenting strategies. After children stay up late to surf the Internet and indulge in social software, many parents who used to prefer communication will also be forced to turn to control under the pressure of reality, which is also the real reason why it is difficult to clarify the cause and effect of cross-sectional research. From the perspective of family education, greater attention should be paid to avoiding an overly rigid reliance on the idealized model of "perfect authoritative parenting." In reality, it is difficult for ordinary families to achieve the rule of high temperature and warm height all the time, so there is no need to over deny themselves because they cannot achieve the ideal model of textbook style. The focus is not on the absolute prohibition of restrictions on Internet access, but on the establishment of a negotiation mechanism: if it is necessary to set network constraints, try to discuss rules with children and avoid unilateral coercive orders; At the same time, parents should be aware of the significance of physical education and reduce the behavior of meaningless head down playing with mobile phones when accompanied by parents and children [5]. Family education cannot be simplified into the management of mobile devices. Priority should be given to the stress and emotional difficulties of teenagers in reality. It should also be accepted: even if the family is good enough, social media may still bring psychological problems to children, and take the initiative to seek school psychological support in case of difficulties. In carrying out parent education, schools should abandon such empty slogans as "more communication, don't confiscate mobile phones". It is necessary to clarify the boundaries to parents: not all restrictions are harmful, and unilateral mandatory control is easy to lead to rebellion; To let parents understand that a large number of families in reality belong to mixed parenting, it is not necessary to pursue the ideal family template, and teach parents how to improve the negotiation mechanism in the contradictory parent-child interaction, rather than instilling a set of perfect standards that cannot be implemented. In addition to media literacy, mental health courses should also help students learn to deal with the emotions brought by online comparison.

At the social level, the psychological problems of teenagers' social media cannot be entirely transferred to the family. On the one hand, the platform needs to optimize the youth mode and

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reduce the content push that is easy to induce comparison and appearance anxiety; On the other hand, many parents may find it difficult to provide high-quality companionship because of heavy workloads and pressures related to livelihood. At the social level, greater efforts should be made to reduce the parenting burden on ordinary families rather than simply placing greater responsibility for family education on parents. For left-behind youth, additional social and psychological support resources should be provided.

5. Conclusion

The result of this study is that by systematically combing the second-hand empirical literature at home and abroad, parental rearing can not only directly affect adolescents' social media use behavior and mental health, but also serve as a moderating variable to buffer or amplify the psychological impact brought by social media. At the same time, it has an indirect effect through multiple intermediary paths such as emotion, emotion regulation ability, self-control, online social cognition, etc. Authoritative parenting combined with negotiated media parenting has a buffering protection effect at the group level, but it is not a panacea for isolating network psychological injury; There is no absolute distinction between good and bad in restrictive media education itself. Its actual effect depends on the generation process of network rules and the basis of parent-child relationship. Media education cannot be simply divided into "guidance" and "control"; It is difficult to solve the internal psychological dilemma simply by relying on the rigid control of equipment. At the same time, the existing research paradigm has its own limitations: a large number of questionnaires belong to cross-sectional research, which has uncertainty and shortcomings; The classification of ideal upbringing does not match the reality of a large number of mixed families; Some studies ignore the external structural pressure faced by families and tend to attribute the psychological risk of teenagers' social media to family education and parents. Thus, it is further concluded that there is no fixed result of the psychological impact of social media on teenagers, and family education is an important boundary condition, but there is an upper limit to the role of the family, and family education cannot be expected to independently resolve all the psychological risks brought by the media environment.

This study provides a valuable reference for future research in this field, particularly by encouraging critical reflection on the idealized models proposed in existing research. In family education research and practice, idealized parenting models should not be applied without considering the practical constraints faced by ordinary families. When interpreting empirical findings, their scope of applicability should be carefully considered, and statistical trends observed at the group level should not be directly generalized to individual families.

Future research should focus more on rural and left behind youth groups to carry out localization research; Add more long-term longitudinal follow-up studies to further clarify the causal direction between variables; Jump out of the four categories of ideal upbringing, and strengthen the exploration of the common contradictory mixed upbringing in reality; At the research level, social structural conditions beyond the family should be taken into account, rather than examining parenting behavior in isolation.

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