

# ***"Childisation of Adults" Due to Media Influence***

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**Abstract:** The subculture trend of adult-childrenisation provides a new way of thinking about life and the pursuit of values for young people during the period of social transformation, and the spread of this phenomenon is externally driven by the function of media culture and entertainment, and internally driven by the audience's need to perform a change of mind. Although it has certain positive effects, it still needs to be correctly guided, and the misplaced media roles and individual self-perception errors caused by excessive dissemination may lead to a series of social problems. In a nutshell, adults can keep their childhood filters, but they can't remain immersed in their childhood mirrors and ignore the realities of their needs and immediate endeavours. It is a very simple truth that real life cannot wait for a miracle. Similarly, real life, even if it is miserable, needs to be faced head on and the future made with the struggles that belong to adults.

**Keywords:** kidult, adult childification, pan-entertainment, youth subculture

## **1. Introduction**

According to a study by American scholar Harrison, children will lose their childhood favourites and toys at a very young age, but as they grow older, they will regain their childhood habits and preferences [1]. As Harrison said, in the past 2023 "Children's Day", "adults shouting for June 1" is no longer a self-mocking joke. Instead of being a joke, it has become an act of "actuality" in social media, with a series of "three-dimensional" ways of pretending to be "young" through titles, clothing and behaviour. Nowadays, Children's Day seems to be not only a festival for children, but also for adults, who enjoy the happiness of Children's Day and love commodities and visual products that are rich in childishness, so much so that there is a popular saying on the Internet: "It is a little bit childish for children, but just right for adults". As a matter of fact, the first signs of this "childishness" and "childishness" in the adult world have already appeared in the early years. For example, popular songs such as "The Lonely and the Brave" and "The Materia Medica" are highly popular among children, while at the same time, children's songs have also begun to break the circle among adults, which is very surprising. "In a small garden digging ah digging ah digging, planting a small seed to open a small flower ....." Recently this children's song burst into flames on the Internet, netizens from all walks of life childishly, have adapted and sung. Related topics have also hit the hot search, causing widespread discussion and sharing. Why does a children's song make adults so "on the head"? Some people like its innocent melody and lyrics, some like the warm smiles of the performers, and some simply follow the trend. Simple lyrics, strong rhythm, and constant repetition make children's songs more likely to produce a "magic melody", and the immersive video experience is also one of the

reasons why the song has been rapidly gaining popularity, coupled with the teacher's infectious expression and the children's pure voices, it is like a catalyst in the communication, speeding up the chemical reaction between the audience and the song, and letting people The teacher's infectious expression and the children's pure voices are like catalysts in communication, accelerating the chemical reaction between the audience and the song, making people feel the urge to sing along.

In the major platforms, the public through secondary creation and with the help of rich media forms to form a secondary dissemination, but also this children's song to achieve the different industries to break the circle, the fermentation of a large number of reasons [2]. Aerospace, communications, firefighting ..... each has its own unique adapted version of the content, or to show the style of various industries, or to carry out warm tips, to explore the mainstream value of the hot children's song, the dissemination of the content of the "grounded", to meet the emotional needs of the audience.

These phenomena have become so frequent that they have gradually spread into a fad, with the combination of Kid and Adult being called "Kidult". Although this phenomenon of the childification of adulthood has been mentioned in academic circles for a long time, there have been fewer studies on it, and its popularity and popularity nowadays is not comparable to that of the past. This paper will attribute this phenomenon from the perspective of communication studies and summarise the problems it brings.

## 2. Literature review

People refer to psychologically immature adults as 'giant babies'. They believe that giant babies have three characteristics: poor independence, the belief that the world must run according to their own ideas, and the belief that things must be divided into two, either black or white. And this phenomenon has become more and more popular with the help of the media. The phenomenon of childish adults has now gradually developed into a youth subculture, from the initial pursuit of material things to the inner pursuit of adults.

As Bozeman said, the concept of adulthood is gradually fading away, and Innes also mentioned that changes in communication technology will produce three results, namely, changing the structure of human interests, the type of symbols and the source of ideas, and the arrival of the media age further breaks down and blurs the boundaries between children and adults with stronger technological power [3]. The widespread spread of adult childification in the media also has complex social and psychological factors. Psychoanalyst Freud's structural theory suggests that a person's personality is divided into an ego, an ego, and a superego, and the phenomenon of adult childification is, in a sense, the ego's revolt against the ego's and superego's suppression, resistance to the socialisation process, and a desire to regain the joys of childhood.

The subculture trend of adult-childrenisation provides a new way of thinking about life and the pursuit of values for young people during the period of social transformation, and the spread of this phenomenon is externally driven by the function of media culture and entertainment, and internally driven by the audience's need to perform a change of mind. Although it has certain positive effects, it still needs to be correctly guided, and the misplaced media roles and individual self-perception errors caused by excessive dissemination may lead to a series of social problems. For example, the weakening of the social function of the media, the over-childrenisation of the members of the society and the over-commercialisation of the communication effect. As a youth subculture, the phenomenon of adult infantilisation is closely related to the current media technology, consumer culture and social psychology [4]. When individuals are powerless to fight against powerful social rules, the "return of communication to children" is a return to purity. Although pure childhood is a kind of escapism, it is also a kind of "gentle resistance" to the reality of the rules that individuals do not approve of but are

powerless to change. At the same time, however, the role dislocation and self-perception errors caused by the over-childrenisation of communication should also be taken seriously.

### 3. Excessive aesthetics of "pan-childrenisation"

Is the aesthetics of adults too childish? Under the influence of the iterative updating of media means and the fissile dissemination of information, the paradigm of popular culture is actually changing.

Traffic tends to flow to where people need it, and the popularity of "childishness" is to some extent a reflection of people's desires. Everyone wants to be unconditionally accepted like a child, no matter how mature and strong they are in the social sense. Children's songs, cartoons, animation and other products have innocent imagery, and audio-visual products that focus on children's innocence are more likely to be widely disseminated in social networks because of their simple, fun and easy-to-imitate framework. "Childishness" is the pursuit of being far away from the utilitarian colours of the adult world, and for adults who live or work in "rolls", it conveys a sense of innocence and warmth, which can satisfy their psychological well-being. For adults, whether they are living or working in the "roll", the sense of innocence and warmth it conveys can satisfy a beautiful psychological need.

Childhood cannot be brought back, but a child's heart can be kept alive. Adults by revisiting the feelings of childhood, from which to harvest simple, happy energy, this "heart of a child" is not lost as a positive orientation. However, if adults still too much pursuit of "pan-childhood", such as deliberately pursuing small-size children's clothing, with childhood aesthetic to constrain themselves and other people, it is likely to affect the physical and mental health. For commodity production providers, the demand for children's interests of adults has created a promising market and industry, however, we should also be careful not to cater to customer preferences to promote excessive "pan-childhood" aesthetics [5].

At the same time, new media, as the leader of the Internet era, has not only changed our behaviour, but also our way of thinking. Today's children are enjoying the joys of new media more freely than any other generation in the past, and they are also becoming busy because of new media. From children's models to children's actors, from children's advertisements to children's films and TV dramas, children seem to become "busy people". It can be said that the emergence of new media has become a new generation of boosters for children's growth, which makes children quickly converge with the adult world and become different "little adults". It can be said that the emergence of new media has become a new generation of children's growth, resulting in children rapidly converging with the adult world and becoming different "little adults". Different scholars have different views on adultised children. Neil Bozeman believes that the "adultised child" refers to an adult who is not fully developed in terms of knowledge and emotional capacity, and is not significantly different from a child, especially in terms of characteristics. Merowitz, on the other hand, argues that whereas print distinguishes between adults and children, television blends the two. Because the basic codes used by television - images and sounds - are similar for all viewers, it propels children into a complex adult world. Our scholar Bu Wei, on the other hand, defines adultised childhood as an adult who has not yet completed in the development of intellectual and emotional abilities, that is, in the age of television, there are no real children and adults, there are only childish adults and adultised children. In the author's opinion, adultised children are "small adults" who are not fully developed physically, cognitively and emotionally, and whose dress, speech, behaviour and desires are all similar to those of adults. Whether "being grown up" and "adultisation" is good or bad for children is worthy of our deep thinking.

On the point of the adultisation of children's behaviour, Merowitz has pointed out that in the age of electronic media, children's and adults' behaviours have started to become more similar [6]. The adultisation of children's behaviour is manifested in the adultisation of children's mannerisms on the

one hand, and in utilitarianism and worldliness beyond their age on the other. For example, in kindergarten, some children give "gifts" to teachers and other children in order to get the support of others, so as to get support in a "pleasing" way. Such "small adult" ways of interacting with each other are a sign of the adultisation of children's behaviour. In particular, it is worth pointing out the adultisation of children's games. With the advent of the new media era, children's childhood games have changed from throwing sandbags, jumping checkers and eagles catching chickens to a series of electronic games such as iPad games, mobile phone games and online games. Today, whether in the street or on the underground, we can easily see mobile phone "game players", these players are both adults and children. Due to the vividness, intuition and context of new media, online games are often addictive. Excessive indulgence in online games not only occupies children's effective learning time, but also damages their physical and mental health. In addition, due to the "all-age" of new media information, children in the process of playing games will inevitably receive violence, pornography and other undesirable information, in the long run, not only is not conducive to the growth of children, but also may cause children's character and personality "alienation". The first and foremost factor in the adultisation of children's values is that they are not aware of their own values. The adultisation of children's values is first and foremost manifested in the pursuit of material goods and fame. People living in the city of desire will inevitably suffer from the epidemic "materialism", this group of people desire to possess more material goods, their desire for goods is almost uncontrollable. Many people take the number of goods they own as a sign of self-realisation, so-called "I own, I exist", and children are no exception to this. Imitation is the nature of children, and most of their ways of doing things and behaviours come from imitating familiar people or objects around them. Therefore, in today's materialistic world, children are also suffering from "materialism". Typical characteristics of these "materialistic" children are that they like to compare themselves with each other and pursue "famous brands", claiming that "they will not wear anything other than famous brands and will not play with anything other than famous brands". In addition, with the continuous development of new media, there are more and more programmes focusing on children, whether they are films or variety shows, which have made a number of child stars famous [7]. When watching the programmes, many children will regard a certain child star as their idol and worship him/her. In fact, children's worship of idols is a stage in their growth process, is their self-centred identification and attachment to the ideal figure in their hearts, but in today's over-exaggerated commercial culture, this worship seems to have changed. Some children's worship is no longer purely focused on a certain quality of the idol, but more concerned about the halo of the star, which in turn gives rise to the desire "I want to be a star". When young children focus on this too early, there is a tendency to become adultised.

#### 4. Juvenile persistence

Sociologists generally agree that it is social factors such as different institutions, economic structures and family composition that influence the speed at which children enter adulthood. G. Stanley Hall, who developed the concept of "adolescence", noted that this transition between childhood and adulthood was not only a product of physiology, but was also related to the spread of education and the enactment of children's statutes at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A century later, Jeffrey Arnett (Jeffrey Arnett) discovered another transitional stage between childhood and adulthood - the adult emergence (emerging adulthood). He argued that adults in this period, although they have escaped the dependence of childhood and adolescence, have not developed the sense of sustained responsibility that should be expected in adulthood. Instead, the reasons for these phenomena are related to the gradual relaxation of sexual moral standards at the time, the delay in childbearing, and the rise in the status of women. Harrison used this to speculate that modern social factors can delay people's adulthood stage more and more later [7]. In addition, he also borrowed the concept of "neoteny" from biology to sociology, which is used to indicate that "neoteny" and "old

age" go hand in hand in a person. The concept of neoteny has been borrowed from sociology to denote the parallelism of "young" and "old" in a person. Nowadays, the childish consumption of adults is a concrete manifestation of "neoteny".

But media scientists, represented by Debray, argue that because sociologists treat technological facts as a non-fundamental factor, they often ignore the relationship between the subject society and the object technology, and that the above mentioned social changes are inseparable from the "media" - just as the establishment of the industrial system is inextricably linked to the birth of the printing press, because changes in communication technology lead to changes in the structure of people's interests and in the tools they use to think. Just as the establishment of the industrial system was inextricably linked to the birth of the printing press, changes in communication technologies lead to changes in the structure of people's interests and the tools they use to think. Based on this, this study found that there is also a correlation between the childlike representation of adults and the development of audiovisual technologies.

Firstly, one of the important impacts of new media is the empowerment of the audience. Specifically, in the audiovisual media, this is manifested in the decline of the cost of audiovisual production, dissemination, and reception, and the audience can receive a variety of different information at any time and any place. Secondly, compared to textual communication, visual communication is characterised by shallow viewing instead of deep thinking, and its emotional function also far exceeds its practical value. This precisely meets the psychological needs of adults in the age group of 18-30 years old: to be able to quickly find the corresponding information when they need to amuse themselves or relieve stress. In addition, with the improvement of living standards, even if the child has reached the age of 18, many parents are still willing and able to shine for them. Therefore, from the time they leave compulsory education to the time they get married and have children, adults have enough space to do what they want to do, which is also known as "pursuing one's own heart". Therefore, many interviewees said that although they have many hobbies that seem to be childish, they will not let them disappear anytime soon.

## 5. Conclusion

At the beginning of its existence, the phenomenon of adult childification may be purely a preference or interest, but as its scale of dissemination continues to expand, so does its social impact, and its acceptance by the audience and its rate of dissemination are gradually increasing. An over-emphasis on childishness in the media for the pursuit of profit will lead to an increase in the entertainment aspect of the media in a limited media space, while the seriousness of the media is slowly dissolved, and the main social function of the media is weakened. Although it is possible to achieve a momentary self-reconciliation in the midst of social conflicts by escaping from the pressure of the real society by staying in the ideal environment of over-childrenisation for a long time, staying in the "children's utopia" constructed by oneself for a long period of time is not conducive to the cultivation of a sound personality of the members of the society as well as the formation of a good cultural environment. Although the phenomenon of childishness of adults provides a cathartic outlet and a pressure-relief valve for the "anxious people" in the context of social transformation, the role dislocation and self-perception errors caused by excessive childishness should also be taken seriously.

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