

# ***The Prosperous Short Video Environment: Hidden Threats to Young People's Mental Health***

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**Abstract:** Abundant online media fill people's lives, especially the prosperity of short videos, which provide a convenient way of entertainment for young people's busy lives. However, many studies have found that while it brings people fun, it also brings many psychological problems. This study aims to address the psychological problems that occur in young people and propose ways to reduce the impact of the problems. By reading existing literature, combined with network data and the current network environment, this article finds out the psychological problems that young people will have after using short video platforms, such as blurring the boundaries between reality and virtual behavior, one-sided videos increasing psychological anxiety. After analyzing the problems, this paper found that the main causes of these problems came from social pressure and the platform's regulatory capabilities. Hence, young people can reshape their understanding of the short video virtual environment and improve their ability to resist the psychological problems caused by exploring new interests.

**Keywords:** Short video, young people, mental health, social pressure

## **1. Introduction**

Recently, online media such as smartphones and TV have been widely used. With the development of short video platforms such as TikTok, Kuaishou and so on, young people no longer just watch news or TV programs on TV for entertainment, they can quickly receive all kinds of social information in short videos. In the complex information, young people will gradually immerse themselves in it and their mental terms will be affected. It has been discovered in life that the impact of mixed content on short video platforms on the mental health of youth is an issue, that has attracted much public attention. With the rise of short videos, many people have begun to worry about whether the discomfort they experience after watching these contents will influence their daily lives.

Research illustrated that the effects of media content on children are pervasive and don't just happen to other children [1]. In recent years, media forms have become more abundant, and people can choose a variety of ways to obtain media information. Along with this, they also encountered many problems. Pierre found that the closer the parasocial relationship with a favorite YouTuber is, the higher the degree of addiction is [2]. This means that the higher the social satisfaction users gain from YouTube, the more immersed users will be in this type of media. In addition, many gamers supplement their gaming by watching game live broadcasts. It is obvious that the combination of these two behaviors often has potential adverse effects and can also affect each other, too [3].

Irresistible and fragmented short videos result in young people's thinking bias [4]. Bossen has found that most teenagers use social networking sites (SNS) passively, and entertainment and emotional satisfaction are the main driving forces of this behavior [5]. The same is true for individuals. Media content affects everyone indiscriminately as well as it does not increase, or decrease based on personal perception. What this article is about to study is the impact that the use of short video platforms will have on young people's mental health, the possible psychological problems, and suggestions for mitigating them.

The research object of this article is the youth group. As the most dynamic and creative group in society, their psychological state should also receive people's attention. This article will find out the impact of the use of short videos on young people's mental health and how it affects youth's mental. Through research on the above content, the author explores the causes of psychological problems among young people to find solutions.

## **2. The Characteristics and Impact of Short Videos**

### **2.1. Features of Short Video**

Short videos are flexible, convenient, and attractive. Compared with an entire TV series or movie that requires people to watch for a long time, short videos are more popular among contemporary young people because of their fragmentation and brevity [6]. In addition, short videos can also provide a platform for young people in different growth environments, including the production affordances of shooting and production, the social affordances between subjects and cultures, and the communication affordances of algorithm push and audio-visual compatibility. They also provide a stage for performance and an opportunity to gain social recognition [7]. Whether it is watching short videos that interest you or sharing interesting things about life or current political hot topics, these motivations together constitute an important reason for young people to use short video platforms. It can be seen from many studies that short videos bring more spiritual satisfaction to young people and add fun to their busy daily lives as well. Not only college students who are studying, but also young professionals who have entered the workplace, watch short videos to meet their recreational demands, information demands and convenient social needs. To attract the attention of young people, short video platforms use personalized algorithms to deliver content that young people are interested in accurately and continuously. Hence, the time youth spend on the platform increases [8]. This allows the short video platform to have a strong and huge customer group--youth.

### **2.2. The Impact of Short Videos on Youth Psychology**

Young people will gradually blur the boundaries between real-life behavior and online behavior in short videos. Teng discovered that "mourning culture" spreads among young people through short videos. Its development is one of the methods for young people to regulate their bad emotions. In other words, to achieve self-protection and spiritual comfort, young people, young people actively stigmatize and irony their current situation. But in the long run, young people will blur the line between whether they are truly mourning or whether they are pretending to be mourning by following the trend gradually [9]. Unconsciously, people gradually develop the behaviors shown in short videos into real life. Young people use "mourning as a social trend" as a reason, so they allow themselves to fall into a decadent life, which will be detrimental to their personal development and become an obstacle to their continuous progress. An Internet culture that was originally born to soothe the emotions of young people has begun to have a negative impact on the real lives of young people. Blurred boundaries often bring many unnecessary negative emotions to young people. For example, when a young person sees violent, reactionary and terrorist content from a short video, they involuntarily think that there are many such things in the world. It means that they believe their

surroundings are full of dangers and threats. This is a manifestation of mean-world perception which is a famous psychological theory. They will bring the content of short videos into real life with regarding the phenomena that appear on the Internet as all of real life. This leads to young people being overly vigilant and panicky about the outside world.

The content of short videos is complex. It is easier for young people to be aroused by the one-sided and fragmented content. Mean-world perception was mentioned in the previous paragraph, that is, if encountering content that is deliberately guided to amplify social events and current political events, young people will be ignited by some one-sided intercepted news, especially panic, anxiety, and worry. Studies pointed out that users' use of short video platforms has three negative emotions including remorse, anxiety, and sadness [10]. Young people generate false negative emotions in short videos, which gradually accumulate and cause psychological problems, eventually leading young people to distrust society, the government, and life. Just like during the epidemic, as an important form of media communication, the content of short videos often affects the psychological emotions of young people. There was a study proving that during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, the higher the degree of pandemic exposure, the higher the probability that adolescents would receive negative information from the media, and then the stronger their anxiety [11]. For instance, when young people see a wealthy family showing off their luxurious house and life in a short video, many young people who do not have such conditions feel not only envy but also sadness and anxiety about their lives after seeing such content. The above situation will bring great psychological pressure to young people.

### **3. Discussion and Suggestion**

#### **3.1. Psychological problems Arising**

##### **3.1.1. The Conflict between Virtual Identity and Real Self**

Young people create a new identity in short videos, show their side, and gain different respect and recognition from it. However, when they return to reality, they will feel the gap between their virtual identity and their real identity. There are differences in the characteristics of the two identities. During the transition between the two identities, young people will blur the difference between virtuality and reality. If there is a significant distinction between virtual identity and reality, it will bring conflicts of self-perception and confusion of identity to young people. Whether the self in the short video is the real self, and whether it should cater to the public's preferences and only show the side that the public likes. These have become problems that trouble young people, interfering with their psychological cognition and judgment.

##### **3.1.2. Psychological Anxiety and Sadness from Short Video Addiction**

The rising influence of TikTok itself and the development of big data push technology have become the key to young people's short video addiction. The herd mentality of young people prompts them to download the highly influential TikTok. In addition, accurate big data push will firmly bind young people to short videos. Short video addiction brings time management imbalance to young people. Watching short videos can bring mental relaxation to young people. They are often immersed in the pleasure of watching videos and forget the passage of time. When they notice the time, they will find that their work and study time has been severely compressed. The anxiety that tasks cannot be completed in time accumulates in the heart, which can easily cause psychological burden and pressure and hurt mental health.

### 3.1.3. Self-Esteem and Body Image Issues

Some studies have found that the higher the level of short video addiction, the lower the self-esteem, the higher the level of anxiety about appearance, and the less likely it is to identify with oneself [12]. For the reason that short video platforms are filled with various beautifications, filters and fictional images, it causes young people to worry about their body image. The beautiful and idealized images seen in short videos give young people a sense of inferiority after comparison. They will feel that they are not beautiful or handsome enough, thus affecting their mental state.

### 3.2. Causes of Negative Impact

The huge pressure brought by society has made young people addicted to short videos. Pressure in real life, such as housing pressure, competition pressure, academic pressure, etc., are important factors that influence young people to watch short videos. This is where youth subculture comes from. As a culture created by young people through various media communication channels, it is different from the current mainstream culture. It shows young people's pursuit of self-expression, highlighting individuality, and reconstructing identity [4]. Short video is a huge platform. A study has further identified social anxiety in youth as a significant risk factor for YouTube addiction [2]. As one of the most popular short video applications in the world, TikTok which is also one of the media communication media, its usage will also be affected by social anxiety. Social pressure will prompt young people who have worked hard all day in reality to open short videos to relax their anxious mood. Due to the simplicity and convenience of short videos, short video platforms can quickly become popular among young people. However, the anxiety and pain that young people get from real life often turn into anger and vent it all on the Internet. Short video applications are a good platform for venting.

The anonymity and virtuality of short videos have become a hotbed for young people to vent their malice. As one of the media communication channels, the short video platform, like other social networking and video software, has the characteristics of anonymity, virtuality, and convenience. Young people can use short video platforms to reconstruct their identities, create an online image that is different from their real identities, and obtain their social and self-identity needs. In the comment areas of many short videos, there are always a lot of malicious comments that curse others. Their behavior is not to share their opinions with others, but to simply vent their dissatisfaction. This emotion is usually jealousy and disgust, which comes from the gap between the virtual network and one's reality. It is amplified by the anonymity and virtuality of the platform as well. Internet violence is also formed by the continuous accumulation of malicious remarks, and the platforms provide a breeding ground for its growth. Every young man spits out bad words with the mentality of venting his emotions. They also vent their dissatisfaction with the hope that "no one will be affected by his temporary remarks". The cumulative effect is cyber violence.

### 3.3. Suggestion

Firstly, reshaping cognitive and behavioral construction can balance the relationship between short videos and youth psychology. It is necessary for young people to establish a positive self-awareness and find various ways to relax. Moderate viewing of short videos can adjust the psychological state of young people and reduce psychological depression [13]. What is more important is to find a balance between virtual and real cognition, emotional relaxation and task completion. Youth can find diversified interests and hobbies, in addition to short videos, explore other media forms and hobbies, including reading books, participating in sports activities, learning music and so on. Diversified entertainment methods help reduce reliance on short videos and distractions. From a social perspective, all social entities should guide young people to reshape their self-perception, assist young

people in distinguishing the difference between virtual identities and real identities to help young people escape from the vicious circle of cognitive confusion and gap anxiety.

Secondly, optimizing short video reviews is a significant measure. The management of media content is a very vital way. The review of short video platforms will become an important factor affecting the mental health of young people. For instance, the platform carefully reviews negative content, that is to say, violent, bloody, and pornographic content, which often affects young people's mental state and cognition of reality. For serious current affairs news such as disasters, short videos should use the content and ideas of mainstream media as a reference to review short video content that distorts facts.

#### 4. Conclusion

With the improvement of social and economic conditions, young people's needs for life are no longer limited to material satisfaction. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, current youth begin to desire more social needs, respect, and self-actualization needs. It is a good choice for them to use a short video platform. There are three main psychological harms caused by short videos to young people: the blurring of the boundaries between reality and virtuality, the anxiety of short video addiction, and the anxiety of self-esteem and appearance caused by the content. The impact of short video platforms on young people often comes from huge social pressure. Young people are eager to get spiritual release and comfort on online platforms. Therefore, short videos have become a new media tool that young people rely on. It has been known before that the convenience and fragmentation of short videos also bring them greater appeal. If to improve the psychological problems caused by short videos to young people, from the perspective of young people, they need to reshape their self-perception as well as the construction of short video behaviors; From a media perspective, relevant platforms need to vigorously review the content of the platform to promote the quality of short videos. It is difficult for many young people to find psychological comfort in real life. Thus, they pin their emotions on virtual platforms to obtain the satisfaction that is missing in reality. The purpose itself is beneficial. Young people can relax, increase their knowledge, broaden their horizons, and develop their individuality. Therefore, if young people can balance the use of short video platforms with real life, they will be able to reduce the impact of short videos on their mental health.

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