Social and Emotional Development of Secondary School Children in the Digital Age

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Abstract. The purpose of this paper is to explore the current situation, impact and coping strategies of secondary school children's social and emotional development in the digital era. With the rapid development of science and technology, digital technology has been deeply integrated into the daily life of secondary school children, and has become an indispensable part of their social interaction, learning and entertainment. This paper analyzes the new forms of social interactions of secondary school children in the digital era, and also focuses on the changes in information acquisition and cognitive development of secondary school children in the digital era, as well as the impact of information overload on the critical thinking and problem solving abilities of secondary school children. Through in-depth analysis of the dual impact of the digital era on secondary school children's social and emotional development, this paper reveals the current challenges, such as cyberbullying and misinformation, and also points out the opportunities, such as providing rich learning resources and cultivating innovative thinking skills. It aims to provide reference for education policy makers, educators and parents to jointly promote the healthy growth of secondary school children in the digital era.

Keywords: digital age, secondary school children, social development, emotional development.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

With the rapid development of information technology, human society has fully entered the digital age. Digital tools such as the Internet, smartphones and social media have become an indispensable part of people's daily lives, especially for children in secondary schools, who, as "digital natives", have grown up with these technologies since childhood. Many studies have shown that emotional and psychological development during adolescence is the most important stage of emotional development in a person's life, as it is the period when social awareness and behavioral performance change dramatically. At the same time, adolescence is an important stage for individuals to explore and develop emotion regulation strategies.[1] With the rapid progress of artificial

intelligence, virtual simulation, big data and other Internet technologies, children's learning methods have gradually broken the time and space constraints of traditional education, and a variety of learning, educational, and virtual simulation APPs have appeared, which have made children's access to knowledge more convenient and intuitive.[2] Digital technology has not only changed their way of learning and entertainment, but also profoundly affected their social interaction and emotional development. Therefore, studying the social and emotional development of secondary school children in the digital era is of great significance for understanding the psychological growth patterns of contemporary adolescents, as well as for formulating effective educational policies and social support measures.

1.2   Literature Review

Scholars at home and abroad have made fruitful research on children's social and emotional development in the digital era. The research covers a wide range of aspects such as the impact of digital socialization on children's social ability, the cultivation of network information and media literacy, and the relationship between cyberbullying and mental health. However, there are still some shortcomings in the existing studies, such as the research perspective is relatively single, most of the research subjects are from a single country or region, and the research method is based on questionnaire surveys and lacks in-depth interviews. Therefore, on the basis of previous studies, this study will further expand the research perspective and enrich the research content in order to obtain more comprehensive and in-depth research results.

1.3   Purpose and Shortcomings of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to reveal the characteristics and laws of the social and emotional development of secondary school children in the digital era, and to analyze the positive and negative impacts of digital technology on them. However, due to the limitations of research conditions and research time, this study may have some shortcomings, such as a more limited research area. Therefore, in the future research, we will try to overcome these shortcomings, expand the scope of the study, and improve the representativeness and generalizability of the study.

2   Emotional Development of Secondary School Children in the Digital Age

In the context of the digital era, the emotional development of secondary school children has been affected as never before. Digital tools such as the Internet, social media, and mobile devices have not only changed their lifestyles, but also profoundly affected their emotional expression, emotional experience, and emotional management abilities.

2.1   Digital Paths for Emotional Expression and Management

Social Media Has Become a New Stage for Emotional Expression. Social media platforms provide secondary school children with a space to instantly share life moments and express their inner feelings. They record their joys and sorrows through words, pictures, videos and other forms, share their emotional experiences with their peers, and seek empathy and support. This digitalized way of expressing emotions makes emotional communication more convenient and private, and at the same time gives secondary school children more emotional autonomy and choice.

Anonymity and Emotional Release. Some social media and online forums allow users to communicate anonymously, which provides a relatively safe channel for secondary school children to release their emotions. When faced with stress, frustration or negative emotions, they may choose to pour out their hearts and seek comfort and advice in an anonymous environment. However, anonymity can also lead to irresponsible speech and emotional outbursts that can negatively affect the emotional well-being of secondary school children.

2.2   Online Emotional Contagion and Empathy

Acceleration of Emotional Contagion. In the digital era, emotions on the Internet can spread and resonate quickly. A post or video with strong emotional coloring may be reposted and commented on a lot in a short time, thus triggering widespread social attention and discussion. Secondary school children, as one of the active user groups on the Internet, are susceptible to this emotional contagion and develop similar emotional responses.

The Influence of Online Public Opinion on Emotions. The orientation and atmosphere of Internet public opinion have an important impact on the emotional development of secondary school children. Positive online public opinion can stimulate the positive emotions of secondary school children and enhance their self-confidence and sense of belonging; while negative online public opinion may trigger their negative emotions such as anxiety and anger, and even lead to mental health problems.

Emotional Resonance and Social Identity. Peer relationship is defined as an interpersonal relationship of equality and mutual support established with others in the process of social interaction among individuals of the same or similar age group and individuals with similar degree of psychological development level.[3] In cyberspace, middle school children form emotional resonance and social identity by sharing common interests, values and life experiences. This emotional resonance not only helps to enhance their social connection and sense of belonging, but also helps them gain emotional support and strength when facing difficulties and challenges.

2.3   Loneliness and Mental Health Challenges

Loneliness in the Digital Age. Adolescents' emotional development is often characterised by sensitivity, volatility and instability, and is also very different from that of adults in many ways. Because adolescents have not yet successfully established top-down emotion regulation, they are more sensitive and impulsive in emotion recognition, perception, and expression, and their emotion regulation is slightly immature [4]. Although digital tools provide secondary school students with rich social channels, over-reliance on these tools may also lead them to feel lonely and isolated in real life. This severance between the virtual and the real may exacerbate their sense of loneliness and psychological discomfort.

Internet Addiction and Mental Health Problems. Die 11. The 5th edition of the International Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems officially recognises for the first time that certain behaviours, whether online or offline, can be addictive[5].This internet addictive behaviour not only affects their schooling and quality of life, but can also lead to a range of mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and sleep disorders.

3   Challenges and Opportunities

3.1   Challenges Faced

Information Overload and Misinformation. The popularization of the Internet has led to a sharp increase in the amount of information that secondary school children are exposed to, and the amount of information has shown explosive growth, with a lot of false and misleading information. At the same time, the authenticity and source of information have become difficult to trace, and it has become more difficult to recognize the authenticity of information. Secondary school children are easily misled when browsing and accepting information, which affects the formation of their values and worldview.

Cyberbullying and Violence. Children's privacy is currently not only unprotected in online social media, but also more likely to be exploited or abused. Compared to offline bullying, the degree of spread of cyberbullying may pose a greater risk to children. [6] Cyberbullying is not only limited to verbal attacks, but also includes various forms such as pictures and videos, which are more visual and spreadable and may bring more serious psychological damage to the victims.

Technology Dependence and Addiction. In the digital era, secondary school children rely more and more on electronic devices, and they may be addicted to online games, social media, etc., resulting in less study time and lower learning effect. And being immersed in the virtual world for a long time, secondary school children may neglect

social activities in real life, leading to degradation of social skills and affecting their overall development.

3.2   Embedded Opportunities

Rich Learning Resources. The "digital natives" are living in an era of explosive information, and children's access to information and knowledge is not limited to textbooks and teachers; electronic devices are like books in the hands of their grandparents, a mobile "knowledge base" for children. This mobile "knowledge base" is characterized by its convenience and richness.[7] This "mobile knowledge base" provides secondary school children with a rich variety of learning resources, and through big data and artificial intelligence technology, the learning platform can provide personalized learning recommendations and tutoring according to the learning situation and interest preferences of secondary school children, so as to improve the efficiency and quality of learning.

Convenient Communication. Digital technology breaks the limitations of time and space, making it possible for secondary school children to communicate with people around the globe at any time and any place, realizing cross-region social interaction and broadening their horizons and friendship circles. On the digital platform, secondary school children can express their emotions and opinions through text, pictures, videos and other forms, enriching the channels and ways of emotional communication.

Cultivation of Innovative Ability. The digital age encourages innovation and exploration, and children in secondary schools can continue to stimulate their own innovative thinking and creativity as they are exposed to and use new technologies. The global framework of "Education 4.0" emphasizes personalized and self-paced learning, lifelong learning, and student-driven learning, heralding a shift in the future schooling system from the traditional model of standardized, staged, and externally-driven learning to a new model of personalized, sustained, and intrinsically-driven learning that ensures that the intrinsic social and emotional needs of each learner are better met. needs are better met and can progress at their own pace of development.[8] By participating in digital projects, programming competitions, and other activities, children in secondary schools can transform their ideas into practical actions and improve their practical and problem-solving skills.

3.3   Loneliness and Mental Health Challenges

Loneliness in the Digital Age. While digital tools provide secondary school children with rich socialization channels, over-reliance on these tools can also lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation in real life. They may have a large number of "friends" and "followers" in the online world, but lack real emotional and interpersonal relationships in real life. This split between the virtual and the real may aggravate their sense of loneliness and psychological discomfort.

Internet Addiction and Mental Health Problems. Some secondary school children may be addicted to digital activities such as online games and social media and be unable to extricate themselves. This internet addictive behavior not only affects their schooling and quality of life, but may also trigger a series of mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders. Long-term Internet addiction may also impair their brain function and cognitive ability.

4   Conclusion

In the context of the digital age, the social and emotional development of children in secondary schools is undergoing unprecedented changes.However The manifestations of human social behavior and the individual properties of man's personality are extremely diverse and dynamic.[9]Therefore, this study reveals the complex mechanism of digital technology on social and emotional development through in-depth analysis of its impact on social interaction, information acquisition, identity, emotional expression and management of secondary school children. Digital technology provides secondary school children with more convenient and diversified social platforms and information acquisition channels, which greatly broaden their social circle and knowledge. However, it also brings a series of challenges such as information overload and cyberbullying, which pose potential threats to the social development of secondary school children. At the same time, the way emotions are expressed and managed in the digital environment has also changed significantly, making secondary school children more vulnerable to online emotional contagion, which in turn has a profound impact on their emotional stability and mental health.

In summary, online media can also be leveraged for positive youth development and empowerment by providing a unique platform for youth to engage and lead social activism.[10] The social and emotional development of secondary school children in the digital age is a complex and multifaceted process that requires the concerted efforts of the government, schools, families and all sectors of the community to create a healthy and positive digital growth environment for secondary school children.

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