

Virtual Ambiguity: The Relationship Between Leftover Men and Leftover Women and Social Platforms

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Abstract. The issue of leftover men and leftover women is an important issue that has attracted much attention in contemporary Chinese society. This article aims to explore the impact and challenges of social media on the issue of leftover men and leftover women. First, by analyzing the causes and social impact of the phenomenon of leftover men and leftover women, it reveals the conflict between traditional concepts and modern lifestyles, as well as the marital pressure and psychological dilemma faced by leftover men and leftover women. Secondly, this article explores the role of social media in the problem of left-over men and left-over women, including the positive effects of social media platforms on changing social patterns, promoting making friends and expanding social circles, as well as possible negative effects such as hindering emotional connections and avatars. Finally, the article puts forward some suggestions, emphasizing the healthy use of social media and encouraging all sectors of society to work together to alleviate the challenges caused by the problem of leftover men and leftover women. This research can provide new perspectives and strategies for understanding and solving the problem of leftover men and leftover women, and promote the harmonious development and progress of society.

Keywords: Social platforms; leftover men and leftover women; urbanization process.

1. Introduction

With the development of the market economy and the expansion of material civilization, the ideological consciousness and values of the majority of young people have also undergone profound changes. In the process of marriage and love, they advocate freedom and individuality and no longer live for the traditional purpose of getting married and having children. Therefore, more and more young people of marriageable age actively or passively choose to marry later or not to marry, which paves the way for society to launch the concepts of “leftover men” and “leftover women”. The so-called “leftover men” and “leftover women” refer to older but unmarried men and women. This phenomenon reflects the contradiction between traditional Chinese values and modern lifestyle and also exposes a series of challenges and problems in the transformation of social structure.

In his book “From Papyrus to the Internet: Social Media in 2000”, Tom Standage concluded that “human beings are born to share”. As he said whether it is due to the instinct of the social brain of primates or the need to exchange information and social life, these are all human beings’ instinctive needs for social interaction. This social instinct is the existence of social platforms Foundation [1].

With the continuous development of human society, in the Internet era, people’s social interactions have broken through the limitations of time and space. Therefore, social platforms as intermediary interactions have gradually integrated into daily life and become an important part of people’s social links. Social media platforms such as WeChat, Weibo, Momo, etc. have become an indispensable part of people’s daily lives. They provide people with a convenient way to communicate with others and make new friends. They also provide a way for the leftover men and leftover women group to New social options. However, the impact of social media on the problem of leftover men and leftover women is not simply beneficial but may actually exacerbate the complexity and severity of this social phenomenon. Therefore, the article combines the two aspects of “leftover men” and “leftover women” with social platforms to discuss the reasons why people who have not yet married choose social platforms to establish relationships, including its positive effects of promoting social interaction and expanding the circle of friends, as well as possible negative effects such as hindering emotional

connections and avatars. Finally, this article will put forward some policy suggestions and social advocacy to guide the healthy use of social media and alleviate the various challenges caused by the problem of leftover men and leftover women.

2. Reasons

2.1. Urbanization Process

“Leftover men and leftover women” usually refer to those men or women who have exceeded the age generally regarded as marriageable by society but are still unmarried. For men, those who are over 30 years old and unmarried are usually regarded as “leftover men”; for women, those who are over 27 years old and unmarried are usually called “leftover women”.

The current situation of marriage and childbearing in China is as follows: left-over men in rural areas and left-over women in cities [2]. Judging from the data of 2010, the number of “older unmarried” men reached about 11 million, but the number of women was less than 4 million. In rural areas, the difference is even greater, with far more men than women, and the number is higher than that in rural areas, about 5 to 1; and because of this huge variance, it is more difficult to find suitable married women and their lives because of the “leftover men” living in the countryside. Although “leftover men” and “leftover women” are both unmarried groups, their underlying connotations are exactly the opposite: “leftover women” living in cities have high education and expect upward mobility; The “leftover men” in rural areas are at a disadvantage and are still sinking. There is a cultural gap between urban and rural areas and the problem of uncoordinated regional development. Therefore, they have the same situation but have polarizing differences in social identity and living environment [3].

2.2. Views on Marriage and Love

The marriage gradient pattern of “men are higher than women and women are lower” when Chinese people are looking for a partner. Specifically, when women choose a partner, they will consider men who are older than themselves, with higher education and income; when men choose their partners, they will choose women who are younger than themselves, with lower education and income, to ensure that they have higher family status. According to the “2010 Chinese People’s Marriage and Love Situation Survey Report”, the popularity of men with rural registered permanent residence is also very different from that of men with urban registered permanent residence: among the women with rural humour interviewed, only 0.7% chose farmers as their ideal partner, and only 3.3% of urban men with rural registered permanent residence choose farmers as their ideal partner [4].

In traditional Chinese society, because individual small families are in a “differential order pattern” formed by large families, they need to deal with various unfamiliar and complex relationships in the marriage and residence model of the husband’s residence. This obviously limits women to male-dominated families and prevents them from developing in many aspects. Under modern development, emotional consciousness is considered to be “fluid”, and the responsibilities and obligations that need to be assumed in traditional society are downplayed. The interactions of urban young people are increasingly centered on the “self” and “inner heart”. They regard marriage and love as a relationship. Experience or a process, abandoning the consequences of “must be together” and “get married if you fall in love”, gives individuals and psychology a sense of freedom [5]. They no longer want to be imprisoned in marriage but pursue individualistic romantic love. This also makes some rural men who are still in the mentality of “always getting married” and do not improve themselves, not to be chosen by women.

From a specific point of view, when it comes to choosing a spouse, most women mainly focus on a man’s financial strength and workability. They believe that a man can only be trusted and entrusted if he has sufficient persistence and ability, and about 65% of women think that a man can be trusted and trusted. Their income should be more than twice as much as their own, but men rarely have these

requirements [4]. It is precisely because of these seemingly feudal ideas that many men who do not meet the requirements become “leftover men”.

2.3. Gender

From a gender perspective, China’s traditional reproductive culture prefers boys. This “boy preference” leads to a higher male-sex ratio at birth [6]. Sometimes in order to give birth to a boy, some people may use methods such as artificial abortion and concealment of household registration to deprive women of their right to live.

Urban women prefer men who have worked for a certain period of time, are relatively stable, and have a certain financial strength [4]. This also shows that women are more willing to marry mature men. Therefore, some men of the Undoing gender may not be able to find jobs that they currently have. They have the ability to buy a house and a car, or they do not have a stable job for the time being, or even have no job. As a result, they are unable to find suitable women in real life and are in a state of being at a loss for a long time.

For rural women, rural women are still trapped in the “humble” thinking of feudal society. They believe that women’s economic ability cannot afford a family, and they do not have the ability to become the “backbone” of a family [7]. In their consciousness, relying on men is a good choice. When their current partners cannot meet their expectations, they will choose to leave.

2.4. Economic Issues

For the “leftover men” group in rural areas, the worse the family conditions are, the more unfair the marriage configuration will be. Untouchability is a large part of the reason for “leftover men”. The discourse system and ideology that regards farmers as inferior and rural areas as inferior have affected all areas of marriage. Pushing the “leftover men” in rural areas into a more disadvantageous situation.

Compared with cities, China’s rural areas have difficulty in developing due to geographical constraints, backward infrastructure construction, low education and other factors, which have kept the economy in a backward state for a long time. According to data released by the National Bureau of Statistics, in 2019, the gap between the per capita income of urban and rural residents was 2.64, with the per capita income in urban areas being 42,359 yuan and 16,021 yuan in rural areas. Therefore, under this gap, young marriageable women will choose to leave the countryside, which makes the male-to-female ratio in rural areas imbalanced [8]. In addition to the impact of backward rural economic development, there is also the impact of men themselves. The reason why men in rural areas cannot enter the city is because they have been indoctrinated with the view that studying is useless since they were young, so they will leave the educational environment early and enter society to work and make money. Because of this, the limitations of academic qualifications and abilities lead them to only enter low-income jobs, a labor market that requires high physical strength. Therefore, the income obtained cannot be compared with urban income. As a result, rural men lack the confidence and ability to choose their spouses [8]. They do not have enough financial strength to pay for the traditional betrothal gifts required for marriage. In addition to the betrothal gifts, they also have the pressure of hardware, houses, cars, etc. Because these costs are huge, rural men will take out loans. High loans will also put the economy in a tight state for a long time in their lives. The huge cost of marriage has become a major “stumbling block” for rural men to get married [3].

3. Dating Platform

3.1. Advantages: Provide Fast and Convenient Platforms for Developing Romance

Dating platforms provide a “flow space” field [9]. There are many sections in this “space field”, such as the user personal homepage, live broadcast room, voice chat room, game field, etc. This forms an online large-scale communication platform.

Users' use of dating platforms is also based on "flow time". Most users will choose to browse the dating platform during their spare time [9]. Open the software and use it when you are bored or during a break. This gives a free-use relationship.

As active parties, users have full autonomy in choosing any social platform, such as choosing the time to use it, which platform to choose, etc. In view of the fast pace of life in modern society, users will be more inclined to this kind of platform that can use fragmented time and can freely enter and exit anytime and anywhere. Compared with the traditional face-to-face blind date method, the method of using social platforms will be more favoured by people [1].

3.2. Disadvantages: Hinders Emotional Connection with Made-up Appearance

As mentioned above, users can use fragmented time to use social platforms, giving them a sense of freedom. However, different users have their own fragmented time, so it is difficult for them to appear on social platforms at the same time for synchronous communication and real-time communication. Those who have WeChat friends are generally relatively "acquaintances", and in a sense they are considered to be always present [1]. For unfamiliar social platforms, users are faced with an uncertain online status, and their needs cannot be responded to in a timely manner, so the emotional response they receive is delayed and full of uncertainty. This state will deepen the emotional relationship. There is a huge impact.

The user appears as an avatar on all social platforms. Take the Soul app as an example. It does not support using real photos of users as avatars. The platform will provide a series of virtual characters from which users can choose their favourite avatars. This creates a sense of mystery for other users on the platform. The process of everyone choosing an avatar is often a window for self-expression, and people will strive to show their "perfect self". It may be an individual's beautified self, or it may be the user's ideal personality image. Therefore, each user cannot know the real image of the user behind each avatar. As a communication platform for strangers, social networking sites allow users to get rid of the constraints of identity and relationships in acquaintance society. In terms of self-presentation, they can show different personalities, talk and express. Yet precisely because of this completely virtual way of getting along, people tend to show the perfect image in their minds and shape themselves into a character they are satisfied with to get along with others, but in reality, they often cannot achieve this state. Therefore, relationships built on social platforms are often short-lived and unreliable. They may not be able to meet each other because the real character image is different from the image created on the Internet; maybe they cannot communicate in depth because long-term contact will expose their true shortcomings and others may not be able to accept them [1].

4. Suggestions

With the rapid development of contemporary society, the age of marriage is generally postponed, and more and more adults are unmarried. Therefore, what is older age and whether it is a "leftover man" or "leftover woman" should be issues that need to be carefully redefined after careful consideration [10].

Regarding "leftover men" and "leftover women", the existing literature and data research at this stage all regard the subjects as low status "leftover men" due to the lack of resources, who are in a passive state, and highly educated "leftover women" who are in an active position [10]. Then those "leftover women" in remote economically underdeveloped areas and "leftover men" in actively developed areas such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou receive less attention. Therefore, continued research should be carried out to expand the coverage of this new phenomenon.

5. Conclusion

There are many reasons why the number of unmarried adults of marriageable age is increasing. The uneven development of urban relations in contemporary society is the main reason for the

emergence of “leftover men in rural areas” and “leftover women in cities”. Behind this is of course the pressure of economic factors and the different views on marriage and love of people in different regions. Various factors combine to form an invisible pressure that affects people’s ability to establish an intimate relationship.

The emergence of stranger communication platforms has enriched the dating choices of users in the Internet era and affected the process of online communication. With the improvement of platform technology and the increase in the number of users, social relationships between strangers have gradually become easier to establish and develop.

The “flow space” provided by social platforms allows users to better conduct personalized communications based on their own time and location. Because of the provision of this platform, intimate relationships that people find troublesome in real life can be quickly established in the virtual world.

However, social platforms have also exposed many problems. It is difficult for him to continue the intimate relationship that appeared online or develop it into a real relationship. The false information and excessive personal shaping behaviour brought by social platforms make it impossible to judge the authenticity of the communication partner in front of you.

However, there are still many restrictive factors. The research cannot fully cover the situation of “leftover women in rural areas” and “leftover men in cities”. At the same time, there is also a lack of investigation and research on the actual situation: feedback from social platform users or the hearts of unmarried people. idea. It is recommended that future research use quantitative research methods to collect a variety of data and conduct extensive research on the social problems of left-over men and left-over women in China.

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