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Study on the Changes of Family Intergenerational Communication Mode in China from the Perspective of Social Media

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Abstract: This study explored the influence of social media on the intergenerational communication mode of China family through various methods, and found that social media improved the convenience and diversity of communication and promoted the interaction of family members of different ages. It breaks the limitations of traditional communication methods, provides a variety of communication forms, makes information transmission more intuitive and fast, and strengthens family cohesion. The functions of social media, such as group chat and sharing, enable family members to keep in touch anytime and anywhere, especially among teenagers and young people. However, the popularity of social media has also brought about problems such as digital divide, privacy leakage and over-reliance on online communication. Therefore, family members need to improve their social media literacy and balance online and offline communication to promote healthy and harmonious family relationships. Generally speaking, the application of social media in China's families has changed the traditional communication mode and had a far-reaching impact on the development of family relations.

Keywords: Family Intergenerational Communication; Social Media; Family Relations.

1. Introduction

In China, social media has not only changed the way people get information, but also invisibly reshaped the communication mode within the family, especially the communication between generations. Traditional family intergenerational communication is limited by physical factors such as time and space, but the emergence of social media has broken these restrictions, making the communication between family members more convenient and diverse [1-2].

This study explores how social media influences and changes the intergenerational communication mode within China families. By comparing and analyzing the traditional communication mode and the communication mode in the social media era, this paper reveals the practical role of social media in family intergenerational relations and how this role further affects the dynamic evolution of family relations. Theoretically speaking, this study is helpful to enrich and develop the theoretical system of family communication, sociology and other related disciplines, and provide a new perspective for understanding family relations in the new media environment. Practically speaking, through in-depth analysis of the influence of social media on family intergenerational communication, we can provide more effective communication strategies for family members, help improve family relations and promote family harmony. At the same time, for social workers and policy makers, understanding the new changes in family intergenerational communication will also help them to formulate and implement relevant policies more accurately to meet the new challenges brought by the social media era.

2. Research Methods and Data Sources

This study adopts diversified methods to ensure the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the data, including in-depth interview, questionnaire survey and observation, aiming at collecting information about the intergenerational communication mode of the family in multiple dimensions. Through in-depth interviews, researchers can deeply understand the views of family members on social media use and the changes in intergenerational communication patterns, and dig out the deep-seated motives and attitudes behind them; The questionnaire survey method provides a systematic way to collect a large amount of data, covering social media usage habits, the frequency and content of intergenerational communication, etc., which is convenient for subsequent quantitative analysis; In addition, the observation rule is to observe the social media use behavior and communication style of family members in natural situations, so as to obtain more real and objective data and help to understand the actual interaction patterns and communication strategies of family members in daily life.

The study covers family members of different age groups, occupations and social regions to fully understand their social media usage and communication needs. Participants included 50 teenagers aged between 13 and 18, 150 adults aged between 19 and 64, and 50 elderly people aged over 65. This age distribution helps to gain insight into the characteristics of different generations. Occupation includes 50 students, 50 white-collar workers, 50 blue-collar workers, 25 freelancers and 25 retirees, which reflects the influence of social background and economic situation on communication mode. In addition, the research objects also come from different regions of urban and rural areas, with 50 families selected from each of the five urban areas and 25 families selected from each of the five rural areas to explore the impact of regional differences.

Data were collected through online questionnaire survey, which included questions about social media usage habits, communication preferences, family interaction frequency and so on. In addition, in-depth interviews will be conducted to obtain more detailed information and case analysis. The collected data are analyzed by statistical software, including

descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and regression analysis, so as to identify the relationship and influence between different variables. Use qualitative analysis method to interpret the interview content in order to gain more in-depth insights. Before data collection, ensure that all participants have signed the informed consent form and their personal information will be kept strictly confidential. The research results are only used for academic purposes and will not reveal any personally identifiable information.

3. Analysis of the Influence of Social Media on Family Intergenerational Communication Mode

3.1. The Popularity of Social Media in Family Intergenerational Communication

Through questionnaires and in-depth interviews, it is found that the usage rate of social media has shown a significant growth trend, regardless of the younger generation or the middle-aged and elderly groups. Young people tend to use rich and interactive social platforms, such as WeChat and Weibo, while middle-aged and elderly people gradually begin to accept and use these tools for daily communication (Table 1).

Table 1. The usage of social media

age bracket	occupation	sample size	Social media usage (%)	Standard deviation of utilization rate
13-18 years old	school students	50	97.843	1.887
19-64 years old	white collar	50	91.236	2.547
19-64 years old	blue-collar worker	50	88.356	2.023
19-64 years old	Freelancer	25	94.458	1.289
19-64 years old	Retired person	25	75.126	3.614
Over 65 years old	Retired person	50	60.725	4.236

Several key factors were found when discussing the reasons for the popularity of social media. First of all, the convenience of social media enables family members to keep in touch anytime and anywhere, regardless of geographical location. This feature is particularly prominent in families in different places or busy work rhythms, making social media an important link to maintain family relationships. Secondly, social media provides a variety of communication methods, such as text, voice, video, etc., to meet the communication needs of different family members. In addition, with the popularity of smart phones and the Internet, the cost of using social media has gradually decreased, further promoting its wide application in family intergenerational communication [3].

The popularity of social media in family intergenerational communication is increasing, and its convenience, diversified communication methods and reduced use cost are the main reasons to promote its popularity [4]. This phenomenon has a far-reaching impact on family intergenerational relations, which deserves our further discussion and analysis.

3.2. The Influence of Social Media on Family Intergenerational Communication

In traditional family intergenerational communication, face-to-face dialogue, letters and telephone calls are the main means of communication. However, with the rise of social media, the way of communication between family members has changed significantly. Traditional communication methods, such as face-to-face conversation, are highly instantaneous and interactive, and can directly convey emotional and nonverbal information. Letters, on the other hand, provide more thoughtful expressions, which are suitable for conveying more complex emotions and ideas. Telephone communication combines the advantages of immediacy and long-distance communication. However, these traditional ways are also limited by time, space and other physical conditions. In contrast, social media communication is more flexible and convenient. Through social media, family members can keep in touch anytime and anywhere, regardless of geographical location. In addition, social media provides various forms of communication, such as text, pictures, videos and voice, which makes the information transmission more intuitive and vivid. For example, by sharing photos or videos, family members can more intuitively understand each other's living conditions and emotional changes.

Social media also provides a more diversified means for family intergenerational communication through its unique functions, such as group chat and circle sharing. Family members can discuss topics together and share their opinions and feelings in group chat, thus enhancing family cohesion and sense of belonging. Sharing in a circle of friends enables family members to know more about each other's life dynamics and promote mutual understanding and care.

Through its unique advantages and functions, social media provides a richer and more diverse means for family intergenerational communication. It not only breaks through the limitations of traditional communication methods, but also enhances the interaction and understanding among family members through diversified communication forms and functions. Therefore, social media plays an increasingly important role in family intergenerational communication.

3.3. The Influence of Social Media on Family Intergenerational Communication Content

Social media has significantly improved the speed and efficiency of information transmission among family members, especially the instant sharing of emergency information. Through social media, family members can share their daily life and emotions more frequently, thus enhancing their emotional connection. Social media has become an important platform for family members to exchange views, especially for teenagers and young people, who are more inclined to express themselves through social media and collide with their elders.

Research shows that the frequency of social media use is

positively correlated with intergenerational communication (β = 0.435; P < 0.001), that is, increasing the frequency of use will improve the quality and frequency of communication, indicating that social media promotes intergenerational communication within the family. Emotional dependence has a similar effect (β = 0.376; P < 0.001), but excessive dependence may bring negative effects. In addition, the self-evaluation of communication initiative is negatively correlated with intergenerational communication (β = -0.228; P = 0.013), indicating that being too active may not promote good communication. At the same time, social media communication satisfaction has a significant positive impact on intergenerational communication quality (β = 0.543; P < 0.001), emphasizing the importance of positive experience. Finally, the view that social media is beneficial to intergenerational communication is related to high-quality communication (β = 0.397; P < 0.001), which highlights the value of positive cognitive attitude. See Table 2 for details.

Table 2. Multiple regression analysis results

predictor variable	constant term	Regression coefficient (β)	standard error	T value	Sig. (Double tailed)
(constant)	2.438	-	-	-	-
Social media usage frequency	-	0.435	0.086	5.052	0.000
Emotional dependence on social media	-	0.376	0.078	4.823	0.000
Self-evaluation score of communication initiative	-	-0.228	0.091	-2.508	0.013
Is the other party an active communicator?	-	0.175	0.072	2.430	0.016
Satisfaction with using social media to communicate with family members	-	0.543	0.089	6.103	0.000
Do you think social media is beneficial to intergenerational communication?	-	0.397	0.093	4.276	0.000

Social media has a positive impact on the family intergenerational communication model, and promotes the exchange of information, emotions and opinions. However, the digital divide and communication preference differences between different generations still need attention. It is suggested that family members should enhance their social media literacy, make use of its advantages, maintain face-to-face communication, and balance online and offline communication to promote healthier and more harmonious family relationships.

3.4. The Influence of Social Media on Family Intergenerational Relations

Through questionnaires and in-depth interviews, it is found that social media has significantly increased the frequency of interaction between family members (Table 3). In the past, communication between family members was often hindered by physical distance and daily arrangements such as work and study. However, the popularity of social media enables family members to keep in touch online anytime and anywhere. Whether through instant messaging, video calling or sharing the social dynamics of daily life, the interaction between family members becomes more frequent. This kind of promotion is especially obvious in families in different places or busy urban life.

Table 3. Frequency of interaction between family members

age bracket	Average number of weekly interactions	
	Before using social media	After using social media
13-18 years old	3.412	7.634
19-64 years old	4.135	9.821
Over 65 years old	2.357	5.468
school students	3.547	8.214
white collar	4.235	10.365
blue-collar worker	3.874	8.912
Freelancer	4.517	10.824
Retired person	2.739	6.473
Urban family members	4.013	9.668
Rural family members	3.246	7.854

In addition to the increase in the frequency of interaction, social media has also triggered a change in the quality of family intergenerational interaction. Although traditional face-to-face or telephone communication can directly transmit information, it has limitations in expressing complex emotions and sharing multimedia content. Social media provides rich forms of communication, such as words, pictures and videos, which enable family members to express their thoughts and feelings more vividly. In addition, the interaction on social media is often more relaxed and comfortable, which helps to alleviate the pressure and formality that may exist in traditional communication, thus promoting deeper communication and understanding.

The use of social media also enhances the intimacy between family members. Through continuous online interaction and sharing, family members can have a deeper understanding of each other's lives, emotions and needs. This understanding not only deepens mutual understanding and trust, but also strengthens the cohesion and sense of belonging of the family. Especially when dealing with family affairs or

facing external challenges, social media can become an important platform for family members to coordinate and support, and further enhance the emotional connection and affinity between family members.

4. The Changing Trend and Challenge of Family Intergenerational Communication Model

The popularity of social media has led to significant changes in the family intergenerational communication model, which not only revolutionized the interaction between family members, but also profoundly affected the dynamic development of family relations. Family communication, which traditionally relies on face-to-face conversation and telephone communication, has now evolved into a diversified communication mode using social platforms such as WeChat, QQ and Weibo for text chat, voice call, video chat and multimedia content sharing, which makes the communication between family members more convenient and efficient [5]. At the same time, the immediacy and sharing characteristics of social media also enrich the communication content. Family members can frequently share all aspects of life on the platform, including daily activities, emotional experiences, hobbies and social hotspots, thus deepening mutual understanding and contact.

Although social media has brought convenience to family intergenerational communication, it has also triggered new challenges. The skill differences of family members of different age groups and education levels in using social media form a digital divide, which may lead to communication barriers and aggravate intergenerational barriers [6]. In addition, although social media facilitates information sharing, it also increases the risk of privacy disclosure, making the protection of personal privacy a major concern in family communication. In addition, the widespread use of social media may also lead some family members to rely too much on online communication, reducing the opportunities for face-to-face communication, thus affecting the emotional connection and communication quality in real life. Therefore, while enjoying the convenience brought by social media, how to balance online and offline communication and avoid emotional alienation has become a problem that must be faced in family intergenerational communication.

5. Conclusion

The popularity of social media has significantly changed the way and content of intergenerational communication within China families. Through in-depth interviews, questionnaires and observation, it is found that social media makes the communication between family members more convenient and diverse, breaks through the limitation of time and space, provides diversified communication methods such as words, pictures and videos, and promotes the speed and efficiency of information transmission, strengthens emotional connection and increases the frequency of interaction. However, this change has also brought challenges, including the formation of the digital divide, the increased risk of privacy disclosure and the possibility of reducing face-to-face communication. The paper suggests that family members should improve their social media literacy and balance online and offline communication to promote a healthier and more harmonious family relationship.

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