

Original Paper

A Review of Factors Affecting Adolescent Social Development

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Abstract

Social development refers to the process by which individuals form social norms, master social skills, learn social roles, control their behavior, and coordinate interpersonal relationships through interpersonal communication and social interaction. Adolescence is a critical period for individual social development, and proper influences during this stage can promote better social integration of adolescents. This paper reviews how personality factors, online communication factors, sibling relationships, and socialist core values influence adolescent social development.

Keywords

social development, adolescents, personality, online communication, sibling relationships, socialist core values

1. Introduction

Marx's famous proposition states that "the essence of man is the ensemble of social relations". From a psychological perspective, people are profoundly influenced by society from birth, with various factors interacting to form their unique personality, character, and other traits. Humans are products of both genetic inheritance and environmental learning, but the influence of environmental factors on social development, character, and moral development far exceeds that of genetic factors. Adolescence is the intermediate stage between childhood and adulthood, during which individuals experience significant physical and psychological changes. Adolescents, due to the coexistence of mature and immature psychological development trends, are easily influenced by external factors, both positively and negatively. This stage is not only an important period for forming correct outlooks on life, the world, and values, but also a critical time for better understanding themselves. This paper aims to directly present different aspects of influencing factors in adolescent social development and consider how adolescents can avoid negative influences and develop in a better direction.

2. Social Development

Social development refers to the process by which individuals form social norms, master social skills, learn social roles, control their behavior, and coordinate interpersonal relationships through interpersonal communication and social interaction (Yang & Xu, 2023). Adolescent social development is influenced by numerous factors from both individual and social aspects. Individual influences mainly include physiological factors, self-awareness, personality traits, temperament types, and individual needs. At the same time, individual development occurs within society, and various interpersonal relationships also affect social development, such as family relationships, parenting styles, peer relationships, and mass media. Adolescent social development determines whether they can successfully integrate into society. Therefore, during this stage, adolescents not only need to overcome various confusions of puberty but also undergo psychological and social training to meet the standards for adapting to social development independently. According to Erikson's theory of psychological development, establishing identity and preventing identity confusion is the developmental task of adolescence. He proposed the concept of a "psychosocial moratorium", noting that adolescents at this stage do not feel ready to take on certain long-term obligations and believe they face too many decisions. Therefore, a "pause" buffer period is needed before making final decisions to delay obligations and prevent premature identity closure. Some scholars have more specifically pointed out three main developmental tasks for adolescent social development: First, adolescents must develop a firm self-identity, meaning they must acquire a solid sense of who they are and who they want to be. Second, they must develop intimacy, that is, the ability to establish, maintain, and terminate intimate relationships with others. Third, they must develop psychosexuality, meaning they need to at least become accustomed to sexual impulses, define and accept their sexual orientation, learn how to engage in healthy sexual contact, and establish mutually loyal sexual relationships. To accomplish these three developmental tasks, adolescents need to engage in self-presentation and self-disclosure (Ji, 2012). Self-presentation means selectively showing certain aspects of oneself to others. Self-disclosure means revealing one's true self to others. Overall, adolescents need to learn to disclose themselves in front of others and appropriately adjust their self-disclosure based on the feedback received from others.

3. Factors Influencing Social Development

Factors influencing adolescent social development can be categorized into individual and social aspects. Individual factors include personality traits, temperament types, and personal needs, while social factors include family, community, and school. They can also be categorized as internal and external factors, with internal factors including individual personality traits, developmental potential, motivation, and interests, and external factors being social factors. Adolescent social development results from the interaction between internal and external factors. This paper selects different aspects of internal and external influencing factors for review to more clearly demonstrate how different factors influence

adolescent social development.

3.1 The Influence of Personality on Adolescent Social Development

Personality is the unique psychological quality that individuals display, different from others, when responding to themselves, others, and surrounding things in the process of adapting to social life. Based on the “Big Five” personality model, Hu Xiaolan elaborates on how five personality traits influence individual interpersonal relationships and personal achievements. The “Big Five” personality model recognizes five basic personality traits: (1) Extraversion may have two extremes, either extremely introverted or extremely extraverted. Extraverted people are more sociable, generally energetic, and quite optimistic and confident. Introverted people are the opposite, even lacking in opinions, and generally more reserved and steady. (2) Agreeableness: This is a dimension that measures interpersonal relationships. People who score high are more reliable and empathetic, generally having many friends. People who score low may be skeptical of the world and primarily focused on their own interests. (3) Conscientiousness: This dimension refers to how one controls oneself and practices self-discipline. High scorers are more responsible and good at self-discipline, with better self-control. Low scorers are more careless, find it difficult to accomplish many things, and may even be unreliable. (4) Neuroticism: This places individuals somewhere on a continuum based on their emotional stability and emotional regulation. Individuals scoring high on the neuroticism dimension are more prone to stress and easily irritable and anxious, while those scoring low can self-regulate and do not experience as many extreme situations. (5) Openness: This refers to having an open, exploratory attitude toward experiences. High scorers are not rigid and unchanging, are better at thinking, and can self-regulate. Low scorers are more rigid and unwilling to try new things.

The influence of personality traits on individual interpersonal relationships is mainly reflected in peer relationships, intimate relationships, and parent-child relationships. Individual social development cannot be separated from interpersonal relationships. Therefore, Hu Xiaolan believes that good interpersonal communication is a comprehensive manifestation of a person’s good social adaptation ability and healthy personality (Hu, 2009).

Peer relationships play an important role in the growth of children and adolescents, and are the first interpersonal relationships they must learn to handle besides family members. They can also learn and regulate their social behavior, emotional expression, and emotional understanding through these relationships. Among the Big Five personality types, children who score high on agreeableness and extraversion can obtain good interpersonal relationships, both now and in the future. Children who score higher on neuroticism or lower on conscientiousness will face some interpersonal difficulties (ASENDORPF & AKEN, 2010). Highly neurotic people are usually accompanied by anxiety, tension, and a tendency toward extremes, traits that are not conducive to normal interaction with others.

Intimate relationships refer to frequent, diverse, influential, and lasting behavioral interdependence between partners. This includes marital relationships and some relatively long-term stable cohabitation

relationships. Numerous studies have found that the personality traits of the other party in an intimate relationship are one of the important factors affecting the intimate relationship. Women who score higher on conscientiousness report receiving more care, women who score higher on agreeableness report having more freedom, and men who score higher on openness pay more attention to their marital relationships (Hu, 2009). However, neurotic personality traits can have a significant negative impact on intimate relationships.

Regarding how personality traits affect parent-child relationships, Hu Xiaolan points out that the influence between parents and children is mutual. A large amount of research has shown that parenting styles affect the formation of children's personality traits. For example, children who experience authoritarian parenting styles are prone to anxiety, worry, depression, and other emotional responses, while children who receive democratic parenting styles are more likely to develop qualities such as optimism, cooperation, and helpfulness. However, because the influence is mutual, the parenting style adopted by parents is also influenced by the child's temperament type. For instance, securely attached children find it easier to establish good parent-child relationships, and parents are also influenced to treat the child in a friendly manner and adopt a democratic parenting style. Conversely, when a defiant child interacts with parents, the parents may also be influenced to take a hard stance, causing the parent-child relationship to deteriorate.

Overall, the influence of personality traits on interpersonal relationships is mainly through the following four aspects: First, different personality traits drive individuals to be attracted to people with the same or similar personality traits and more inclined to interact with them. Second, different personality traits have their own characteristics and make different responses in the process of interaction. Third, similarly, when interacting with peers, one is also influenced by personality traits. Finally, differences in personality traits also give us different interpersonal circles (Hu, 2009).

3.2 The Influence of Online Communication on Adolescent Social Development

As mentioned earlier, self-presentation and self-disclosure are two necessary skills for adolescents to complete their social development. Online communication influences adolescent social development by utilizing these two skills. Ji Haiying points out that the anonymity, accessibility, and processability of online communication content all affect the controllability of adolescent self-presentation and self-disclosure (Ji, 2012). She further elaborates on how these three characteristics of online communication influence adolescent self-disclosure and self-presentation controllability.

The anonymity of online communication gives people secrecy and anonymity when communicating. Anonymity is one of the important reasons for deindividuation; when people have anonymous identities in online communication, they easily lose their sense of individuality and personal responsibility. At the same time, with the protection of anonymous identity, people can more freely show their true selves. The impact of anonymous online communication on adolescent social development has both positive and negative aspects. The positive influence is manifested in the fact

that online communication removes some factors present in face-to-face communication, such as blushing, shyness, or concerns about one's appearance in face-to-face communication. However, anonymity can also become a shield for cyberbullying, allowing adolescents to engage in verbal attacks, insults, and other behaviors without restraint. Adolescents are always seeking information to gain identity and intimacy. The emergence of online communication provides them with channels to obtain large amounts of information. The accessibility of the internet allows them to choose groups with similar interests online and have opportunities to meet groups that would be difficult to encounter in real life. At the same time, adolescents can more conveniently spread information related to themselves through the network. This accessibility of online communication provides a channel for adolescents to establish friendships with groups they cannot access in life, as well as to receive support from peers with similar or identical experiences (Ji, 2012). The processability of online communication allows adolescents to deliberate and polish content when communicating with others, catering to others' preferences to gain social approval. On one hand, this can make their self-presentation and self-disclosure more refined; on the other hand, it can easily lead adolescents into distress that does not match reality.

Ji Haiying describes how online communication influences adolescent social development from three aspects: identity, intimacy, and psychosexuality. The influence of online communication on adolescent identity development is through self-concept and self-esteem. Self-concept refers to the beliefs and ideas that individuals develop about themselves, including three interrelated components: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. Self-esteem is the emotional aspect of the self, usually referring to an individual's evaluation of self-worth and related experiences. Self-concept fragmentation and self-concept integration are two common hypotheses describing how online communication affects self-concept. The self-concept fragmentation hypothesis believes that due to the anonymity of the internet, adolescents can switch different identities to communicate with others in the online world, and they will meet various different people and ideas, establish connections with them, and easily cause personality fragmentation. The self-concept integration hypothesis believes that adolescents experience collisions with different groups and ideas, which better confirms their self-concept. The specific impact of online communication on self-esteem is that it can satisfy adolescents' need to receive praise and recognition from others. The more positive feedback adolescents receive from the internet, the higher their self-esteem.

The influence of online communication on the development of intimacy is through two aspects: establishing friendships and maintaining friendships. The author elaborates on how these two aspects are influenced by online communication through two hypotheses: the rich-get-richer hypothesis and the social compensation hypothesis. The former believes that adolescents who already have higher social skills will benefit from the internet, while the latter believes that adolescents who are not good at face-to-face communication will communicate more with others online, as a form of social

compensation for interpersonal communication. Research on the influence of online communication on adolescents' maintenance of friendships also mainly revolves around two hypotheses: the displacement hypothesis and the stimulation hypothesis. The former believes that online communication takes up the time for adolescents to communicate with friends in reality. The latter emphasizes that online communication can promote communication with friends. Due to the convenience of online communication, there will be more time to maintain and consolidate existing friendships, thereby increasing intimacy. Compared with the displacement hypothesis, more people support the stimulation hypothesis, and online communication with already acquainted friends more easily increases intimate relationships. Online communication also provides more opportunities for the development of adolescent psychosexuality. The anonymity of the internet provides a communication channel for sensitive topics in face-to-face communication for adolescents. Therefore, adolescents will use the internet to explore topics related to sex. But there are also risk factors, such as online temptation and sexual harassment.

In summary, due to the anonymity, accessibility, and processability of online content, the impact of online communication on adolescent social development is a mix of benefits and drawbacks. Adolescents need to actively discern and reject negative temptations in online communication.

3.3 The Influence of Sibling Relationships on Adolescent Social Development

Sibling relationships refer to the relationships formed when two or more children in a family influence, learn from, and promote each other by sharing their views, attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge through physical, verbal, and nonverbal interactions (Zhang, Y. M. & Zhang, Z., 2021). Zhang Yanmin and Zhang Zhen conducted research on the influence of sibling relationships on adolescent social development. The study used college student social development level assessment scale and sibling relationship scale to survey students from four different universities in Nanning. After processing and analyzing the data, the following results were obtained: (1) College students in Nanning universities have relatively good sibling relationships, and their social development is at a medium level. (2) There are significant gender differences in college students' sibling relationships, with male students scoring higher on sibling relationships than female students, and female students showing less conflict in sibling competition. (3) There are no significant differences in college students' sibling relationships based on the number of siblings, brother-sister relationships, or birth order. (4) There are no significant differences in college students' social development based on gender, number of siblings, or relationships. (5) In terms of emotional aspects of social development, female students perform better than male students. (6) There are significant differences in college students' social development based on birth order in the family, with the youngest having the best social development and those in the middle having the lowest social development scores. (7) Sibling relationships are significantly correlated with social development, and intimate, warm sibling relationships are conducive to social development (Zhang, Y. M. & Zhang, Z., 2021). Through analysis and discussion, Zhang Yanmin and

Zhang Zhen point out three aspects that are influenced by sibling relationships: social cognition, social emotion, and social behavior. Different types of sibling relationships have different impacts on personal social development. Social cognition refers to the cognition of situations, cognition, interpersonal relationships, self-confidence, and self-identity. When facing social problems, warm sibling relationships can enhance communication and cooperation between siblings, thereby encouraging individuals to make correct attributions. Personal values and interpersonal relationships will also develop in a positive direction, thereby promoting individual social cognition. In addition, warm sibling relationships can make it easier for individuals to learn empathy, enhance self-disclosure and self-presentation, and help individuals have a deeper understanding of themselves. Warm sibling relationships can enable individuals to form good attachment relationships with peers, and the influence of sibling relationships on individual social emotions is through this path. Good attachment relationships can provide emotional support to individuals, help them establish diverse intimate relationships, and meet emotional needs. Conflicting sibling relationships, on the other hand, will damage attachment, cause emotional pain for individuals, hostility toward siblings, suspicion of their siblings or society, and they are more likely to feel anxious, depressed, lonely, and so on. The influence of sibling relationships on individual social behavior is mainly through social learning. Warm sibling relationships are more likely to produce social learning by providing each other with various learning opportunities, such as interpersonal communication, emotional expression, emotional management, and other skills, to acquire pro-social behavior and self-identity.

3.4 The Influence of Socialist Core Values on Adolescent Social Development

Socialist core values are an important spiritual pillar of contemporary society, influencing people of different industries and age groups in various aspects. They are proposed based on inheriting and promoting excellent traditional Chinese culture and rooted in contemporary Chinese society. Wu Yarong summarized four characteristics of socialist core values: three-dimensionality, reality orientation, ethnicity, and open interactivity. Three-dimensionality means that from the structure of socialist core values, they involve three aspects: citizens, society, and the country. Each aspect progresses upward layer by layer, forming a value complex that is both highly generalized and three-dimensional (Wu, 2016). Reality orientation means that socialist core values are not empty slogans but can penetrate into everyone's life and provide specific value orientations. For example, "honesty" and "friendliness" at the citizen level constantly remind us of the values we need to uphold as citizens. Ethnicity means that socialist core values are specific to the Chinese nation, and everyone can find their own way of life and expression habits in them (Wu, 2016). Open interactivity means that socialist core values can be truly practiced between people and are not something that a single individual can achieve alone. Socialist core values are transmitted between groups, promoting better social integration for everyone.

Due to these characteristics of socialist core values, their influence on adolescent social development is also significant. They influence adolescent social development in three aspects: the development of social roles, political socialization, and the socialization of daily life norms (Wu, 2016). The influence on adolescent social roles is mainly reflected in the fact that socialist core values involve three levels: citizens, society, and the country, and all three levels are closely related to everyone. The values at each level have a value-guiding role for different social roles. For adolescents, they can feel their connection with the country through national-level values, understand the meaning of being a part of society through social-level values, and constrain themselves through citizen-level values to become good citizens of the country. The influence on adolescent political socialization is reflected in the fact that socialist core values not only convey correct values but also correct political beliefs and clear political attitudes, thereby deeply influencing adolescent political socialization. The influence on adolescent daily life norms is reflected in the fact that for socialist core values to exert their true effect, they must be integrated into our daily lives, making their influence omnipresent and constant like air.

4. Conclusion

Adolescents face different groups in life, access extensive information, and various influences permeate everything. This paper only lists a few different aspects of influence, including internal factors such as personality traits and external factors such as online communication, sibling relationships, and socialist core values. Different factors influence different aspects of adolescent social development through their own characteristics, and some characteristics may have negative influences. At this time, adolescents need to discern different influences, and parents, teachers, and peers can play a guiding role, helping adolescent social development progress in a positive direction.

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