

Exploring the Causes and Solutions for Short Video Addiction Among College Students in China

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Abstract: This paper investigates short video addiction among college students in China, examining its causes, impacts, and potential solutions. It highlights how excessive use of short video platforms can negatively affect students' academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being. The study identifies both internal factors, such as personal psychological needs and habits, and external factors, including social pressures and platform design, as key contributors to addiction. To address this issue, the paper proposes a multi-level approach involving individual, institutional, and societal strategies. Recommendations include promoting self-awareness and digital detox at the individual level, enhancing counseling services and implementing policies at the institutional level, and fostering parental involvement and public awareness at the societal level. The paper emphasizes the need for a comprehensive and collaborative effort to mitigate short video addiction and support healthier digital behaviors among college students.

Keywords: Short video addiction, causes and solutions; college students

1 Introduction

In recent years, the rapid advancement of technology and the widespread availability of smartphones have revolutionized the way people consume media. Short video platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and similar applications have seen explosive growth in popularity. Short videos, which are defined as videos under 5 minutes in length, are characterized by their fragmentation, interactivity, richness, and embeddedness; These features cater to the current lifestyle of audiences who use fragmented time for browsing and disseminating information (Wang H., 2022). As of June 2023, the number of short video users in China has reached 1.026 billion, accounting for 95.2% of the total internet users, and spanning across all age groups (CINIC,2023). This implies a great user base of short videos in China.

The convenience and shareability of short video platforms greatly satisfy college students' learning needs, desire for expression, and social demands (Guo X. & Guo Y. , 2018). As a result, these platforms have become highly popular among the college student demographic, even leading to the phenomenon of short video addiction (Wang X., 2021). Short video addiction refers to a compulsive and excessive engagement with short

video content, leading to adverse effects on an individual's daily life, academic performance, and mental health (Xie X. & Jia Y. , 2021). This phenomenon is particularly concerning among college students, who are at a critical juncture in their personal and academic development. The addictive nature of short videos can be attributed to their design, which often includes captivating content, infinite scrolling, and personalized algorithmic recommendations that maximize user retention and engagement. As a result, many college students find themselves spending excessive amounts of time on these platforms, often at the expense of their academic responsibilities and personal well-being.

The significance of exploring the causes and solutions to short video addiction among college students cannot be overstated. Understanding the underlying factors contributing to this addiction is essential for developing effective interventions that can mitigate its negative impacts. This study aims to investigate the multifaceted reasons behind short video addiction in college students in China, examining individual psychological traits, environmental influences, and the inherent characteristics of short video platforms. By identifying these contributing factors, the study seeks to propose comprehensive strategies to help students achieve a healthier balance in their media consumption. By systematically exploring the causes and consequences of short video addiction and proposing targeted interventions, this research aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on digital media consumption and its implications for the well-being of college students. It is hoped that the findings of this study will foster a healthier digital environment that supports both academic success and personal growth.

2 Definition and Effects of Short Video Addiction

2.1 Definition of Short Video Addiction

The definition of addiction originally comes from substance addiction, initially limited to substance addiction. In 2011, the American Society of Addiction Medicine included addictive behavior in the category of chronic diseases, with specific symptoms affecting the brain's reward mechanisms, emotional drive, memory, and related circuits. The characteristic of addiction is that excessive behavior activates the brain's reward system, transforming the behavior into a reinforced behavior.

As academic research on addiction theory progressed, the British scholar Griffiths proposed a specialized investigation focusing on behavioral addiction in 1996. Griffiths (1998) proposed that behavioral addiction is an addictive behavior based on a strong psychological dependence and compulsive behavior effect, such as theft addiction, gambling addiction, game addiction, Internet addiction, shopping addiction, sports addiction, sex addiction, overeating addiction, etc., all belong to the category of behavioral addiction.

With the third Industrial Revolution, information technology became seamlessly woven into people's daily lives. Building upon the concept of behavioral addiction, scholars subsequently introduced the notion of technology addiction. Young (2007) holds that technology addiction is a phenomenon characterized by a heightened psychological dependence resulting from the excessive, abnormal, and unreasonable utilization of specific modern technologies by individuals exhibiting behavioral patterns.

Building upon the concept of technology addiction, researchers have further delineated Internet addiction. American psychiatrist Ivan Goldberg M., the first to propose the concept of "Internet addiction," contends that it is a phenomenon marked by substantial psychosocial harm stemming from the excessive and inappropriate utilization of the Internet (Ivan Goldberg M., 2007). Young (2016) defined Internet addiction as an impulse control disorder under the influence of non-substance addiction according to the criteria for pathological gambling in DSM-IV. Zhou Q. (2018) believed that Internet addiction refers to the long-term and habitual use of the Internet, the desire to continue to use the Internet and a high degree of psychological dependence, so that it is difficult to self-release behavior and chronic or periodic mental addiction, and it is accompanied by tension, tolerance and withdrawal restraint to increase the time of Internet use.

In the past few years, with the surge in popularity of short video platforms, the concept of short video addiction has emerged. Individuals addicted to short video mainly through the carrier of mobile phones, with the help of network technology functions. At present, the concepts related to people's behavior of using short videos mainly include short video addiction (Qin H., 2019; Xie & Jia, 2021; Zhao & Kou, 2024), short video social media dependence (Hu W., 2021), short video overuse (Wang J., 2020), short video APP user addiction behavior (Chen A., 2019). This study adopts the concept of short video addiction.

2.2 Negative Consequence of of Short Video Addiction

Short video addiction has garnered widespread attention due to its potential harms. Numerous studies have demonstrated that addiction to short videos can damage physical health, trigger psychological issues, disrupt normal interpersonal relationships, and negatively impact academic performance through factors such as attention distraction, poor time management, and reduced study time.

First of all, short video addiction may cause harm to the physical and mental health of social individuals. It has been found that short video addiction is associated with individual psychological issues, including anxiety, depression, life satisfaction, loneliness, low happiness, and depressive symptoms, while agreeableness and conscientiousness act as protective factors (Pu et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021). Moreover, some studies have also confirmed that short video addiction can disrupt sleep patterns, leading to difficulties in sleeping and reduced sleep quality (Zhang Y., et al., 2019; Zhao & Kou, 2024). Furthermore, the deviant worldviews, outlooks on life, and values presented in short videos can also result in cultural erosion, distorting the cognition of university students and weakening their ability to distinguish right from wrong (Xiao, 2022).

Last but not least, many studies have shown that short-video addiction has a negative impact on college students' study. Chen. et al. (2022) found in their study that addicted short video users experience difficulties in maintaining and exhibit impaired attention concentration. Ye et al. (2022) concluded from their study that short video addiction impaired the internal and external learning motivation of college students. In addition, some studies have confirmed that short video addiction is an important factor causing college students to delay page continuation (Hu S., 2021; Huang W., 2022).

3 Causes of Short Video Addiction

3.1 Internal Factors

Some studies have noted the Psychological Factors that attribute to students' addiction to short videos. The frequency of short video usage and certain personality traits, such as introversion and neuroticism, have been found to collectively impact internet addiction (Zhang X. et al., 2019). This is consistent with previous research by Kuss & Griffiths (2014), which identified neuroticism as a key psychological and social factor in the development of internet addiction. Moreover, recent studies focusing on college students have highlighted the role of personality traits in short video addiction, with high levels of neuroticism and low levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness being associated with a higher susceptibility to short video addiction (Li X., et al., 2021). Additionally, negative life events, perceived relative deprivation, and self-compensation motivation have also been linked to short video addiction among college students, suggesting the complex interplay between psychological factors and the development of addiction in this demographic (Jiang X. et al., 2023; Pu Y. et al., 2023). These findings emphasize the significance of psychological factors in understanding and addressing short video addiction.

3.2 External Factors

Previous studies have highlighted that short video usage satisfies users' diverse needs such as interpersonal/affiliation, self-presentation, entertainment, stress release, and pursuit of novelty (Tian et al., 2023). Users of short video platforms are constantly discovering new needs during their usage, leading to the emergence of new usage motivations (Zhang X., 2021). This continuous discovery of needs, coupled with compensatory expectations of fulfilling various needs through short video usage, may contribute to tendencies of excessive use (Zhang X. et al., 2019). Furthermore, short video platforms utilize big data algorithms to recommend highly stimulating content, which can result in excessive consumption and potential addiction, as highlighted by Zhang Y., et al. (2020). These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of short video addiction and the complex interplay between user needs, platform algorithms, and usage motivations.

The role of parental behavior in influencing adolescents' short video addiction is evident, as seen in the positive relationship between parental phubbing and adolescents' short-form video addiction, with refusal self-efficacy moderating this relationship (Wang & Lei, 2022). Additionally, parental neglect has been found to be positively related to short-form video application addiction among Chinese adolescents, with alexithymia mediating this link (Li F. et al., 2023). These findings emphasize the importance of familial and environmental factors in shaping individuals' susceptibility to short video addiction, highlighting the need for comprehensive interventions and support systems involving both family and environmental influences.

4 Strategies for Addressing short Video Addiction

4.1 Individual-Level Strategies

To address the issue of short video addiction among college students, it is imperative to implement strategies at the individual level that enhance self-awareness and self-control. One effective approach is the promotion of mindfulness and digital detox practices. Mindfulness, a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, can be particularly beneficial (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Practices such as meditation and mindful breathing exercises can help students develop a heightened awareness of their digital habits, allowing them to recognize and manage the impulse to engage compulsively with short video content. Digital detox, on the other hand, involves taking regular breaks from digital devices to reduce dependency and restore balance (Roberts & David, 2020). Encouraging students to allocate specific times of the day or week for digital detox can prevent overuse and foster a healthier relationship with technology. Additionally, students should be encouraged to set personal time limits for using short video platforms. This can be facilitated by utilizing built-in features on smartphones and apps that monitor and limit screen time, providing tangible ways for students to manage their digital consumption effectively.

Promoting healthy hobbies and alternative activities is another crucial strategy to combat short video addiction at the individual level. Universities can play a pivotal role in this by promoting participation in extracurricular activities such as sports, arts, and various clubs. These activities provide students with alternative sources of enjoyment and fulfillment, reducing the time they might otherwise spend on short video platforms. For instance, engaging in sports can offer physical benefits and a sense of accomplishment (Sari & Suryanto, 2017), while participating in arts and crafts can stimulate creativity and provide a constructive outlet for self-expression. Furthermore, encouraging social interaction through organized events and gatherings can help students form meaningful, face-to-face relationships, decreasing their reliance on virtual interactions. By fostering a vibrant campus life with diverse activities, students are more likely to find rewarding experiences offline, which can mitigate the allure of endless short video consumption. Moreover, structured social interactions and community-building activities can enhance students' sense of belonging and provide emotional support, further reducing the need for digital escapism (Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003).

Education on digital literacy is an essential component of individual-level strategies to address short video addiction. Digital literacy encompasses the skills and knowledge required to use technology responsibly and effectively (Buckingham, 2007). Universities should organize workshops and seminars focused on educating students about the potential risks associated with excessive screen time and the importance of maintaining a balanced digital lifestyle. These educational initiatives can cover topics such as the psychological impacts of digital addiction, strategies for managing screen time, and techniques for critically evaluating digital content. Additionally, integrating digital well-being topics into the curriculum can ensure that all students receive formal education on managing their digital consumption (Selwyn, 2012). This can be achieved through dedicated courses or modules within existing programs, providing students with a comprehensive understanding of digital literacy. Educators can also incorporate discussions on digital habits and well-being

into their teaching, fostering an environment where students are encouraged to reflect on and discuss their digital behavior. By equipping students with the knowledge and skills to navigate the digital landscape responsibly, educational institutions can empower them to make informed choices and develop healthier relationships with technology.

4.2 Institutional-Level Strategies

To effectively combat short video addiction among college students, educational institutions must adopt comprehensive strategies that address the issue at a systemic level. One crucial approach is the enhancement of counseling services tailored specifically to digital addiction. Universities should offer specialized support for students struggling with short video addiction, including individual counseling sessions and support groups (Young, 2007). These services can provide students with personalized guidance and coping strategies, helping them understand the underlying causes of their addiction and develop healthier digital habits. Counseling services can also incorporate cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) techniques, which have been shown to be effective in managing addictive behaviors (Beard, 2005). Additionally, universities can train counselors to recognize and address the unique challenges associated with digital addiction, ensuring that students receive the most relevant and effective support.

Awareness campaigns play a pivotal role in sensitizing the student body to the dangers of short video addiction and promoting a balanced lifestyle. Universities can launch comprehensive awareness campaigns that highlight the risks of excessive screen time and the benefits of moderate, mindful digital consumption (Livingstone & Smith, 2014). These campaigns can utilize various channels, including social media, posters, workshops, and lectures, to reach a wide audience. Collaborating with student organizations and peer educators can enhance the effectiveness of these campaigns by creating relatable and engaging content (Moreno & Whitehill, 2014). By raising awareness about digital addiction and providing practical tips for managing screen time, these initiatives can foster a campus culture that prioritizes digital well-being. Additionally, integrating digital wellness topics into orientation programs for new students can ensure that incoming students are educated about healthy digital habits from the outset of their university experience.

Policy implementation is another essential strategy that institutions can employ to mitigate short video addiction. Educational institutions can establish screen time regulations that limit the use of personal devices during lectures, study hours, and other academic activities (Lemola et al., 2015). These policies can help students focus on their academic responsibilities and reduce distractions caused by short video platforms. Institutions can also implement measures to monitor students' usage patterns of campus Wi-Fi for non-academic purposes (Rosen, Carrier, & Cheever, 2013). By analyzing this data, universities can provide feedback to students about their digital habits and offer resources to help them make necessary adjustments. Additionally, universities can create designated tech-free zones on campus, such as libraries and study halls, where the use of personal devices is restricted. These tech-free zones can provide students with a conducive environment for focused study and reflection, reducing the temptation to engage with short video content.

Support from educational institutions extends beyond policy implementation and awareness campaigns. Universities can actively promote the development of a balanced lifestyle by offering programs and resources that encourage healthy behaviors (Reiner & Bentley, 2013). For example, institutions can organize workshops on time management and stress reduction, providing students with tools to manage their academic workload and reduce the urge to escape into short video platforms. Collaborating with mental health professionals, universities can offer seminars on the psychological impacts of digital addiction and strategies for maintaining mental well-being in the digital age (McGonigal, 2011). Furthermore, institutions can create opportunities for students to engage in meaningful offline activities, such as volunteering, internships, and community service projects. These initiatives not only provide students with valuable experiences but also help them build connections and develop a sense of purpose outside the digital realm.

4.3 Societal-Level Strategies

Addressing short video addiction among college students requires a holistic approach that extends beyond individual and institutional interventions to encompass societal-level strategies. One of the most impactful societal strategies involves parental guidance and involvement. Educating parents about the signs of digital addiction and effective methods for guiding their children's digital habits is crucial (Clark et al., 2018). Parental education programs can be developed to inform parents about the potential risks associated with excessive screen time and the importance of setting boundaries (Rideout, 2016). These programs can be delivered through workshops, online resources, and community events. By equipping parents with the knowledge and tools to manage their children's digital consumption, families can play a proactive role in preventing short video addiction. Additionally, promoting family activities that do not involve screens can help strengthen family bonds and provide students with fulfilling offline experiences. Encouraging activities such as outdoor sports, board games, and family outings can reduce reliance on digital entertainment and foster healthier lifestyle choices (Lauricella et al., 2015).

Collaboration with short video platforms is another essential societal strategy to mitigate short video addiction. These platforms can be encouraged to develop and implement features that promote healthier usage patterns (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). For instance, platforms can design algorithms that suggest breaks after a certain period of continuous use, reminding users to take a pause. Implementing features that track and display the amount of time spent on the platform can help users become more aware of their usage habits (Bickham et al., 2018). Additionally, content regulation policies can be strengthened to reduce the availability of highly addictive content and promote more educational and informative videos. Short video platforms can also be incentivized to create partnerships with educational institutions to promote digital literacy and responsible usage campaigns. By working together, platform developers and educational institutions can create a more balanced digital environment that prioritizes user well-being.

Public awareness and advocacy are critical components of societal-level strategies. Launching national campaigns to raise awareness about digital addiction and its impacts on youth can help bring this issue to the

forefront of public discourse (Chassiakos et al., 2016). These campaigns can be spearheaded by government agencies, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions, leveraging various media channels to reach a broad audience. Public service announcements, social media campaigns, and community outreach programs can highlight the risks of excessive short video consumption and promote strategies for maintaining a healthy digital balance. Additionally, ongoing research into digital addiction is essential for developing evidence-based policies and interventions. Governments and research institutions can fund and support studies that investigate the causes, effects, and effective treatments for digital addiction. The findings from these studies can inform policy development and guide the creation of targeted intervention programs (Montag & Walla, 2016).

Legislative and regulatory measures can also play a significant role in addressing short video addiction. Governments can enact laws that require digital platforms to implement features that protect users from excessive use (Livingstone et al., 2017). For example, regulations can mandate the inclusion of usage tracking tools, break reminders, and age-appropriate content filters. Additionally, policies can be developed to promote transparency in algorithm design, ensuring that the mechanisms driving user engagement are aligned with users' well-being (van Dijck et al., 2018). Governments can also support initiatives that promote digital literacy and responsible usage in educational curricula nationwide. By integrating digital well-being education into school programs, students from a young age can develop a healthy relationship with technology.

Community-based initiatives are another effective societal strategy. Local communities can organize support groups and peer-led programs to address digital addiction (Hollis et al., 2017). These groups can provide a platform for individuals to share their experiences, learn from each other, and develop coping strategies. Community centers and non-profit organizations can host workshops and seminars on digital well-being, creating opportunities for residents to gain knowledge and skills to manage their digital consumption. Additionally, communities can promote recreational activities and events that offer alternatives to digital entertainment, encouraging residents to engage in physical, social, and cultural activities (Neuman, 2018).

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the pervasive issue of short video addiction among college students in China necessitates a multifaceted approach to mitigate its negative impacts. This study explored the various causes of this addiction, identifying individual psychological traits, environmental influences, and platform-specific characteristics as key contributors. Effective solutions require a combination of individual, institutional, and societal strategies. At the individual level, enhancing self-awareness, promoting healthy hobbies, and providing digital literacy education are essential. Institutions play a crucial role through specialized counseling services, awareness campaigns, and policy implementation. Societal efforts, including parental guidance, collaboration with video platforms, and public awareness initiatives, further support these measures. By addressing short video addiction comprehensively, we can foster a healthier digital environment that promotes academic success and personal well-being for college students.

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