



Meta-analysis of psychological factors influencing short-video addiction in adolescents

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SUMMARY: Objective: The main purpose of this study is to carry out a quantitative evaluation of the psychological factors that affect adolescents' short video addiction in recent years. **Methods:** Firstly, the relevant literature of CNKI, Wanfang, web of science, Scopus and other platforms were collected and meta-analysis was conducted. After statistics, 31 studies involving 33385 participants were included in the analysis process. Secondly, CMA statistical software was used to analyze the collected literature data, focusing on the relationship between adolescent short video addiction and psychological factors such as loneliness, anxiety, social support, boredom tendency. **Results:** The pooled correlation coefficients (r) and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) for the predictors were as follows: loneliness ($r = 0.303$; 95% CI [0.245, 0.358]); anxiety ($r = 0.324$; 95% CI [0.285, 0.362]); social support ($r = -0.215$; 95% CI [-0.309, -0.117]); boredom proneness ($r = 0.395$; 95% CI [0.283, 0.497]). In the analysis of regulatory factors, the average age significantly adjusted the relationship between loneliness and short video addiction, and met the requirement of $p < 0.05$, indicating that it was statistically significant. **Conclusion:** Research shows that loneliness, anxiety and boredom are the main risk factors of adolescent short video addiction, and social support is the protective factor of adolescent short video addiction. The above research provides important theoretical support for preventing and alleviating adolescent short video addiction.

KEYWORDS: Psychological factors; Short video addiction; Adolescents; Meta analysis

1 Introduction

In recent years, with the rapid development of mobile Internet technology, the short video platform has been widely popularized and has become the leading media of online cultural consumption. The popularity of short video platform is mainly due to its simplicity, accessibility, fast information transmission and visual entertainment, which has been highly recognized by users.

Teenagers' short video addiction is a new form of Internet addiction, which is mainly manifested in teenagers' forced reuse of Kwai, tiktok, rednote and other platforms, and has the characteristics of continuous psychological desire and behavior dependence [1]. According to a national survey conducted by China Youth Daily, of the 10000 college students interviewed, more than 80% often use short videos, 26.5% watch short videos for 2-5 hours a day, and 8.1% watch short videos for more than 5 hours a day. More than 70% of the respondents clearly

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indicated that they had signs of addiction, and more than 21.6% of the respondents had short video addiction disease [2]. Adolescent short video addiction can cause many adverse consequences, including the decline of academic performance [3], the interruption of normal learning activities, the increased risk of depression and anxiety symptoms [4], and the serious disorder of sleep quality and circadian rhythm [5].

If teenagers have short video addiction behavior, it will seriously affect their physical and mental health. Many scholars have studied the psychological factors of adolescents' short video addiction behavior, but the focus and conclusions of these studies are different. For example, some studies emphasize that loneliness is the key influencing factor of adolescents' short video addiction behavior [6], while others emphasize the stimulating effect of boredom on adolescents' short video addiction behavior. Many studies also have controversies on the cognition of the protective role of social support in adolescents' short video addiction behavior, and many research results are contradictory. The main reason for these differences can be attributed to the differences in sampling methods, demographic characteristics and measurement tools, and it is impossible to comprehensively unify these research conclusions. In this regard, the introduction of meta-analysis provides a robust method to systematically integrate the heterogeneity of influencing factors of adolescent short video addiction behavior by quantifying the merger effect and identifying the sources of variation.

Therefore, this study uses meta-analysis technology to analyze the influencing factors of adolescents' short video addiction behavior, focusing on the influence of four core psychological factors, namely loneliness, anxiety, social support and boredom tendency, on adolescents' short video addiction behavior, in order to provide a comprehensive theoretical basis for the intervention and treatment of adolescents' short video addiction behavior.

2 Materials and methods

2.1 Literature search

In terms of the influencing factors of adolescents' short video addiction behavior, this paper selects CNKI, Wanfang, VIP (China Science Journal Database) and Baidu scholars as the main sources of Chinese research literature, and web of science, Google Scholar, Scopus and ScienceDirect as the main sources of English research literature. Related research literature search keywords include "loneliness", "anxiety", "social support", "boredom", etc., and combined with "short video addiction", "short video use problems", "short video overuse", "short video dependence" and other keywords.

Existing studies have confirmed that psychological diseases such as loneliness and anxiety are highly correlated with the generation of adolescent short video addiction behavior, while social support plays an important role in buffering and protecting adolescent short video addiction behavior, and boredom tendency plays a core psychological driving role in the generation of adolescent short video addiction behavior. The above four influencing factors cover the three psychological fields of adolescents' emotion, social resources and motivation, and are commonly used survey indicators. In addition, self-control, neuroticism, fear of missing and other factors will also have a certain impact on the generation of short video addiction in adolescents. Nevertheless, this study still draws on the research results of the existing literature and selects four core indicators, namely loneliness, anxiety, social support and boredom tendency, to study the mechanism of adolescent short video addiction.

2.2 Sample selection criteria

Studies were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) The study addressed factors influencing short-video addiction; (2) The study employed an empirical research design. Theoretical papers and reviews were excluded; (3) The study reported sample size and correlation coefficients or effect sizes that could be converted into correlation coefficients; (4) The study population comprised adolescents. After the keyword searches, the retrieved records were further screened. The screening procedure is shown in Figure 1. Following a strict selection process, 31 studies were included in the meta-analysis, yielding 40 independent effect sizes.

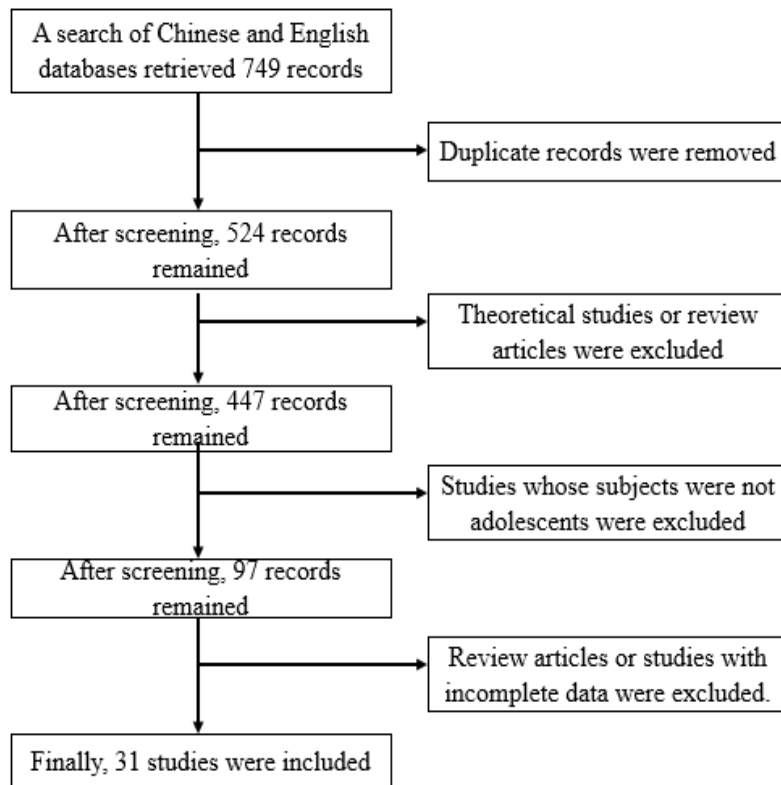


Figure 1: Literature screening flow chart.

2.3 Data processing and coding

To accurately assess the effects of various antecedent variables on adolescent short-video addiction, the following key information was extracted from each included study: author, year of publication, sample size, study population and influencing factors. A summary of the included studies is provided below. Table 1 shows the relevant information of the literature included in the study.

Table 1: General characteristics of included studies(partial).

Included study	Sample size	Study population	Influencing factor
[7]	993	university students	loneliness
[8]	685	university students	loneliness
[9]	1084	secondary-school + university students	loneliness; boredom proneness
[10]	1277	secondary-school students	loneliness
[11]	673	university students	boredom proneness
[12]	775	university students	boredom proneness
[13]	721	secondary-school students	boredom proneness
[14]	972	secondary-school students	boredom proneness
[15]	696	university students	boredom proneness
[16]	604	university students	boredom proneness
[17]	202	university students	anxiety
[18]	651	university students	anxiety
[19]	288	university students	anxiety
[20]	532	university students	social support; boredom proneness

In order to ensure the high accuracy of the research results, multiple interpolation technology is used to supplement the missing data, and the sensitivity analysis of the interpolated data is carried out to evaluate the robustness of the calculation process. All data were extracted independently by two researchers to ensure the consistency and accuracy of the research process and conclusions.

In order to ensure the horizontal comparability of the research on the influencing factors of adolescent short video addiction behavior, Fisher's Z transform was used to standardize the correlation coefficient (r) of the influencing factor model. The correlation coefficient (r) can be converted into a value with approximate normal distribution characteristics by Fisher's Z transform, so as to enhance the statistical characteristics. Fisher's Z conversion formula is as follows:

$$Z = 0.5 \times \ln\left(\frac{1+r}{1-r}\right) \quad (1)$$

Effect-size calculations were performed using CMA software. The conventional thresholds used to interpret correlation coefficients in this study were: small effect $r < 0.30$; medium effect $0.30 \leq r < 0.50$; large effect $r \geq 0.50$.

3 Results

3.1 Publication-bias assessment

Potential publication bias was assessed using funnel plots. In the absence of publication bias, a symmetrical funnel shape is expected; asymmetry in the plot may indicate the presence of bias. Additionally, the fail-safe N was computed to assess the robustness of the results. The fail-safe N estimates the number of null-result studies that would be required to render the pooled effect non-significant. Figure 2 display the funnel plots for the different predictors.

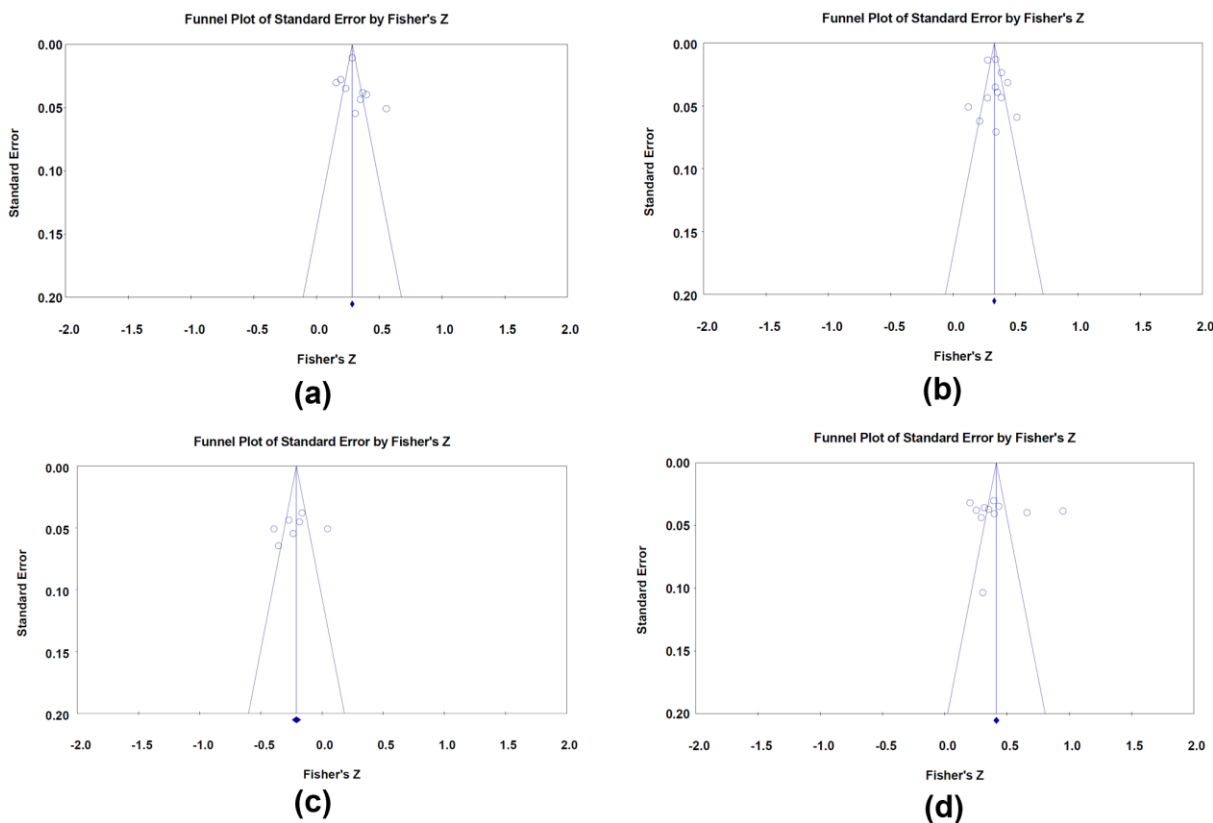


Figure 2: Funnel plot for the effect of (a) loneliness, (b) anxiety, (c) social support, and (d) boredom proneness on adolescent short-video addiction.

Inspection of the funnel plots revealed symmetrical distributions of effect sizes, with no evident signs of publication bias. The calculated fail-safe N values for loneliness, anxiety, social support, and boredom proneness were 2085, 4377, 242, and 3595, respectively. Each of these substantially exceeds Rosenthal’s criterion of $5k + 10$, suggesting that even in the presence of some publication bias, the statistical significance of the pooled effects is likely to remain robust.

3.2 Heterogeneity tests

Heterogeneity among studies was assessed with Cochran's Q statistic and the I^2 statistic. The results of the heterogeneity test are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Heterogeneity test results

Hypothesized relationship	Q	df	P-value	I^2
Loneliness → adolescent short-video addiction	74.081	8	0.000	89.201
Anxiety → adolescent short-video addiction	65.950	11	0.000	83.321
Social support → adolescent short-video addiction	47.012	6	0.000	87.237
Boredom proneness → adolescent short-video addiction	310.068	10	0.000	96.775

As shown in the experimental data in Table 2, the Q index values of the four hypothetical cases are significantly higher than their degrees of freedom (df) index values, and their corresponding P values are all 0.000, indicating that there is significant heterogeneity, and the differences in the observed results cannot be completely attributed to the sampling error.

The I^2 statistic quantifies the proportion of observed variance that reflects real differences between studies, rather than random chance. Using commonly accepted thresholds (0-25%: low

heterogeneity; 25-50%: moderate heterogeneity; >50%: high heterogeneity), the I^2 values in this analysis all exceed 50%, indicating high heterogeneity. To account for this heterogeneity, a random-effects model was employed to estimate the pooled effect sizes. Additionally, subgroup analyses were conducted to explore potential sources of heterogeneity.

3.3 Main-effect tests

In this section, the random effect model is used to study the role of various influencing factors of teenagers' short video addiction behavior. The calculation results of the random effect model are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Primary effect test results

Hypothesized relationship	Model	k (effect sizes)	r	95%CI		Two-tailed	
				lower	upper	Z	P-value
Loneliness → adolescent short-video addiction	Random	9	0.303	0.245	0.358	9.907	0.000
Anxiety → adolescent short-video addiction	Random	12	0.324	0.285	0.362	15.445	0.000
Social support → adolescent short-video addiction	Random	7	-0.215	-0.309	-0.117	-4.253	0.000
Boredom proneness → adolescent short-video addiction	Random	11	0.395	0.283	0.497	6.443	0.000

According to Cohen[21], the effect-size conventions for correlation coefficients are as follows: $|r| \approx 0.10$ (small), $|r| \approx 0.30$ (medium), and $|r| \geq 0.50$ (large). The results presented in Table 3 indicate that loneliness, anxiety, and boredom proneness each have a statistically significant, positive moderate effect on adolescent short-video addiction, with boredom proneness showing the largest influence. Social support demonstrates a negative effect of small-to-moderate magnitude, acting as a protective factor that reduces addiction risk, although its influence is weaker. All factors have $P = 0.000$, and the 95% confidence intervals do not include zero, indicating stable and significant effects.

3.4 Sensitivity analysis

In order to evaluate the robustness of the research conclusion, the sensitivity analysis of four influencing factors of adolescent short video addiction behavior, namely loneliness, anxiety, social support and boredom tendency, was carried out by exclusion method. The sensitivity plots for each predictor are presented in Figure 3- Figure 6. Figure 3 shows the sensitivity analysis results of loneliness and adolescent short video addiction, Figure 4 shows the sensitivity analysis results of anxiety and adolescent short video addiction, Figure 5 shows the sensitivity analysis results of social support and adolescent short video addiction, and Figure 6 shows the sensitivity analysis results of boredom tendency and adolescent short video addiction.

Meta Analysis

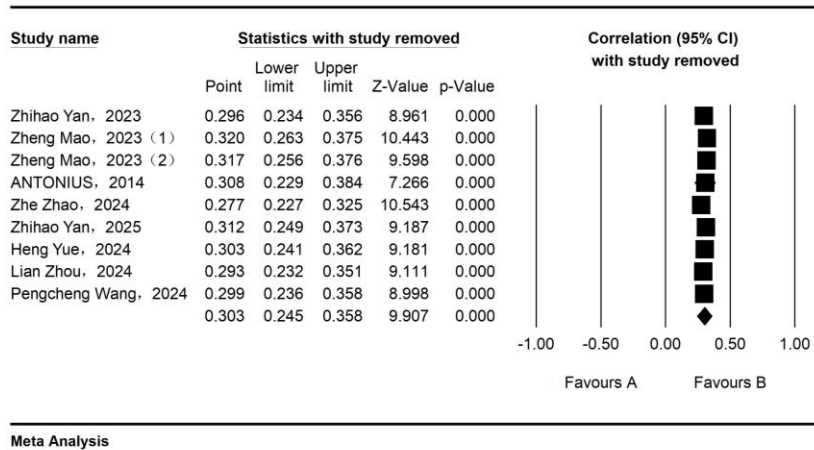


Figure 3: Sensitivity analysis between loneliness and adolescent short-video addiction.

Meta Analysis

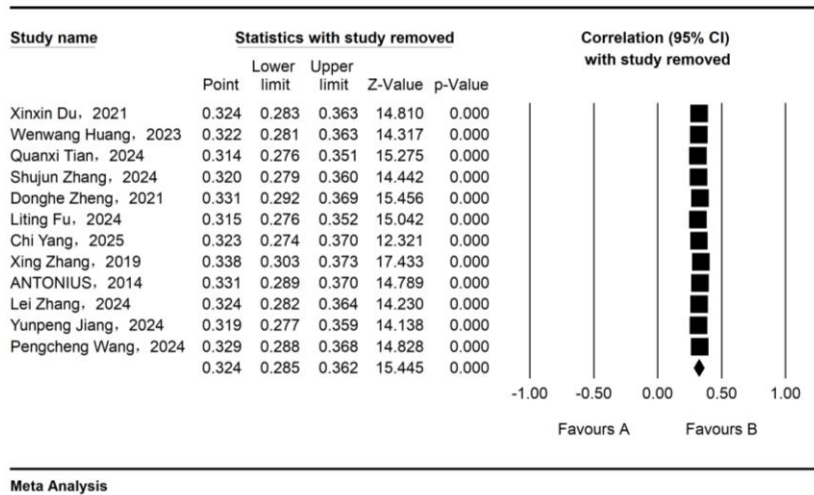


Figure 4: Sensitivity analysis between anxiety and adolescent short-video addiction.

Meta Analysis

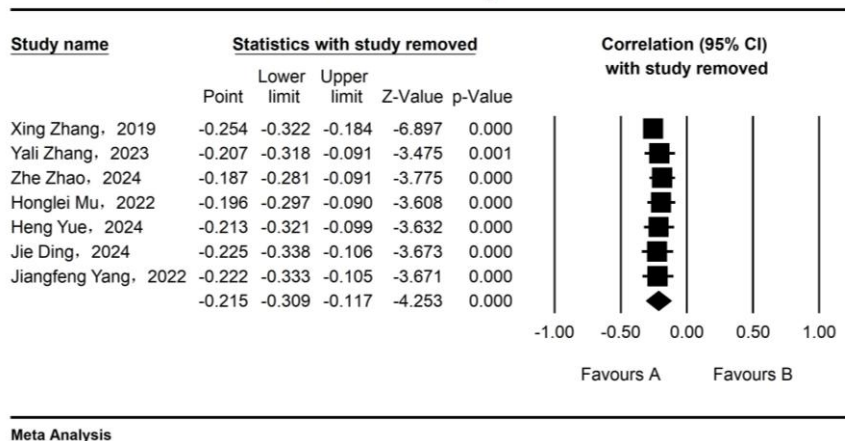


Figure 5: Sensitivity analysis between social support and adolescent short-video addiction.

Meta Analysis

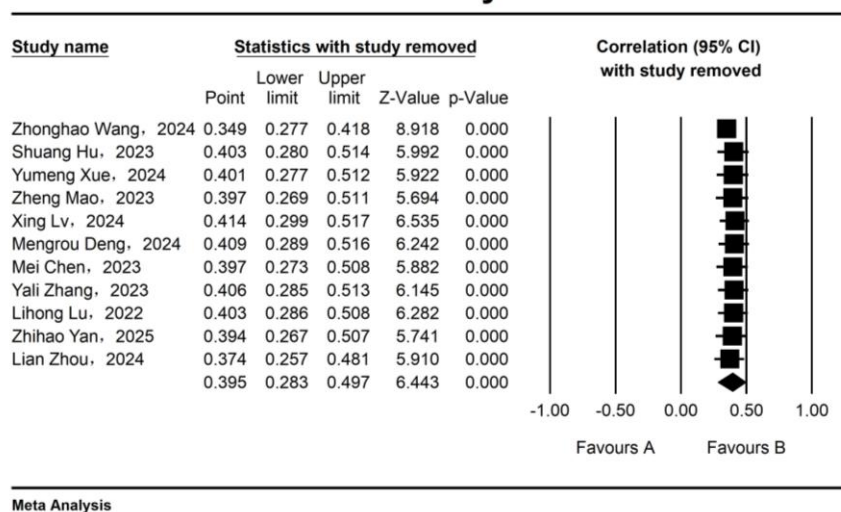


Figure 6: Sensitivity analysis between boredom proneness and adolescent short-video addiction.

The leave-one-out results indicate that the pooled effects for all four predictors remain stable. Effect-size estimates changed only slightly when individual studies were excluded. Z-values remained significant ($Z > 1.96$) and $P = 0.000$ for all predictors. Although the exclusion of particular studies led to minor fluctuations in effect sizes, the overall conclusions were not materially affected. This demonstrates high robustness of the associations between the four predictors and short-video addiction.

3.5 Moderator (subgroup) analyses

To explore heterogeneity and potential mechanisms, subgroup analyses were performed to test whether mean age and gender moderated the associations between the four predictors and short-video addiction. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Subgroup analysis results

Hypothesis	Moderator	Category	k	r	95%CI		P	Between-group heterogeneity		
					Lower	Upper		Q	df	P
Loneliness → adolescent short-video addiction	Mean age	Less than 18	3	0.214	0.131	0.294	0.000	6.154	1	0.013
		More than 18	6	0.353	0.277	0.424	0.000			
	Gender	Fewer males than females	8	0.293	0.232	0.351	0.000	3.620	1	0.057
		More males than females	1	0.380	0.311	0.445	0.000			
Anxiety → adolescent short-video addiction	Mean age	Less than 18	4	0.331	0.284	0.377	0.000	0.117	1	0.732
		More than 18	8	0.316	0.244	0.385	0.000			
Social support → adolescent short-video addiction	Mean age	Less than 18	2	-0.256	-0.405	-0.093	0.000	0.304	1	0.582
		More than 18	5	-0.199	-0.322	-0.069	0.000			
	Gender	Fewer males than females	6	-0.222	-0.333	-0.105	0.000	0.323	1	0.570
		More males than females	1	-0.180	-0.264	-0.093	0.000			
Boredom proneness → adolescent short-video addiction	Mean age	Under 18	3	0.308	0.197	0.410	0.000	1.684	1	0.194
		More than 18	8	0.427	0.277	0.556	0.000			
	Gender	Fewer males than females	6	0.338	0.288	0.387	0.000	0.928	1	0.335
		More males than females	5	0.461	0.203	0.659	0.001			

The results presented in Table 4 indicate that mean age significantly moderates the relationship between loneliness and adolescent short-video addiction. Teenagers are at a special age, especially those over the age of 18, because of the pressure from job hunting, college graduation and family responsibilities, which will aggravate psychological diseases such as loneliness and anxiety. The superposition of these factors will make teenagers more inclined to seek emotional substitution through short video platforms, thus increasing the risk of addiction. In addition, gender also has a significant regulatory effect. In the male dominated sample, the effect of short video addiction is stronger, which may be closely related to men's expectations of social and cultural emotional expression and social interaction. The main mechanism is that men are generally considered to be independent, patient and self-disciplined. When facing loneliness or emotional distress, men may not be inclined to seek traditional social support or relieve by expressing their feelings, and are more likely to turn to short video platforms for instant entertainment to alleviate loneliness and emotional distress.

In the study of the relationship between adolescent anxiety and short video addiction behavior, the average age did not show a significant regulatory effect. Teenagers under the age of 18 often use short videos to relieve academic and social pressure, while teenagers over the age of 18 may use short videos to cope with the pressure of college graduation and work. The instant entertainment of short videos can effectively meet the needs of teenagers to relieve anxiety.

In terms of the research on the psychological impact of social support on adolescents' short video addiction, the results show that the average age and gender do not have a significant regulatory effect on it, indicating that social support has a certain stability on the mitigation and protection function of adolescents' short video addiction[22]. The study also showed that the buffering effect of social support on adolescents' short video addiction behavior is universal: adolescents under 18 and adolescents over 18 can reduce their dependence on short video through the support of their families, schools or peers, while the difference in gender composition has not substantially changed this protective effect.

In terms of the impact of boredom tendency on adolescent short video addiction behavior, although age and gender composition did not have a significant moderating effect in statistical significance, adolescents aged 18 or above and the male dominated group showed a stronger driving effect on short video addiction. The main reason is that these adolescent groups face higher life pressure, which makes them more likely to use short videos to combat boredom.

4 Discussion

4.1 Strengthen emotion-regulation skills and build social-support networks

The impact mechanism of factors such as loneliness, anxiety, and boredom tendencies on adolescent short video addiction behavior is that adolescents are relatively fragile in emotional regulation and self-management, making them more susceptible to high levels of loneliness and anxiety, and therefore tend to adopt short video consumption as a coping and relief strategy. From a psychological perspective, improving emotional regulation skills can reduce the impact of negative emotions on adolescent short video addiction behavior. In addition, psychological intervention can also help adolescents develop healthy emotional management methods, thereby reducing their psychological dependence on short video platforms[23].

From a sociological perspective, both family and school are the main sources of social support for adolescents. Parents should maintain regular communication with their children, increase high-quality shared time, create open channels for emotional communication, and help

adolescents establish a strong and supportive network, thereby reducing loneliness caused by a lack of emotional support. In addition, schools should strengthen their attention to mental health education for young people, provide targeted social skills training, encourage young people to participate in collective activities, cultivate a sense of belonging, and reduce the attractiveness of short video platforms to young people.

In addition, the growing movement of digital-minimalism advocates the selective use of technology, reduction of sensory overload, enhancement of cognitive-regulation capacity, and the cultivation of temperate lifestyle habits. Digital minimalism can help adolescents regain the emotional stability and strengthen their sense of mastery and well-being. Additionally, educators should recognize the anxiety adolescents experience due to intense competitive pressures (often referred to as “involution”), and reduce psychological burdens through policies that lessen academic workload and provide career-planning guidance.

4.2 Optimize behavioral alternatives and enhance self-regulatory efficacy

Research has shown that boredom tendencies have the strongest impact on adolescent short video addiction behavior, and intervention measures should focus more on the combination of behavioral substitution and cognitive reconstruction, constructing a dual intervention pathway. At the behavioral level, schools and communities should provide diverse extracurricular activities and volunteer service opportunities for young people. By creating mobile experience opportunities for young people, they can fill the psychological gap caused by boredom among the youth population. For example, when teenagers engage in sports, artistic creation, or volunteer service, they will experience a sense of achievement, which naturally reduces their dependence on short videos[24].

From the perspective of healthy behavior, the core of the substitution effect of adolescent short video dependence lies in engaging adolescents in purposeful activities, thereby changing their perception of time and value. Teenagers can transform scattered and boring moments into purposeful experiential activities by frequently participating in low stress activities, gradually changing their time use habits and promoting their transition from "passive participation" to "active choice". Ultimately, these alternative activities will not only help teenagers overcome their addiction to short videos, but also encourage them to maintain psychological balance by independently choosing meaningful activities.

4.3 Promote internalization of platform responsibility and refine healthy-communication mechanisms

From the perspective of health communication, interventions for adolescent short video addiction should shift from "maximizing user time" to "maximizing health value", which can help reduce passive habituation and compulsive use among adolescents[25]. At the content level, platforms should establish a "health content library" and prioritize high-quality materials such as science popularization. In addition, the platform should integrate a psychological warning module for specific accounts of teenagers. When dangerous behaviors such as frequent nighttime use by teenagers are detected, the system should automatically push prompts and notify guardians to issue warnings. This can establish a connection between technical intervention and family supervision. Research has shown that adolescent users who receive such reminders have reduced their average short video usage time by about 25% [26].

4.4 Build an integrated prevention-and-control system and deepen social collaborative governance

Fundamentally, preventing and controlling adolescent short video addiction is a systemic social task that requires joint efforts from individuals, families, schools, platforms, and governments. At the policy level, it is crucial to accelerate the implementation of the "Regulations on the Protection of Minors on the Internet". It is necessary to clarify the binding responsibilities in platform areas such as data security, content review, and addiction prevention, and establish strict regulatory mechanisms.

From a social-governance perspective, policymakers can draw on the Healthy China 2030 principle of "mainstreaming health across all policies". This principle suggests the introduction of digital-literacy curricula in the education system and the establishment of offline community activity centers. By preferentially allocating public resources, authorities can provide adolescents with non-digital social and recreational options. Ultimately, a tripartite prevention-intervention model should be formed, comprising: strengthened social support, enhanced individual capability, and technical and regulatory constraints. Such an integrated approach can not only effectively address current short-video addiction issues, but also contribute to the development of a healthy digital ecosystem that supports the holistic development of adolescents.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable.

Data availability

Data for this study will be made accessible upon request.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

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Authors' contributions

MY: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Writing-original draft, Writing-review & editing, Supervision. LQ: Methodology, Funding acquisition Writing-review & editing.

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