The Impact Study of WeChat on College Students' Interpersonal Communication

Weiling Wang

College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Xi'an Jiaotong University, China

*****Corresponding Author:** *Weiling Wang, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Xi'an Jiaotong University, China*

ABSTRACT

In this study, 539 college students were tested by social networking and WeChat survey questionnaire of college students, the interpersonal relationship scale and the social anxiety scale in order to measure usage of WeChat among College Students, interpersonal behavior and Social anxiety level. The results showed that the use of WeChat had a positive effect on College Students' interpersonal behavior, and can reduce the level of social anxiety, but the impact on the emotion was negative.

Keywords: *WeChat, college students, interpersonal communication*

INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of information technology, internet has become more and more popular in people's daily life. It seems general for people to communicate on the internet with each other. Social media's effect on our ability to interact and communicate is visible throughout all areas of society, so what does this mean for interpersonal communication? There has been a shift in the way we communicate; rather than face-to-face interaction, we're tending to prefer mediated communication (Keller, 2013). Many studies have shown that people actually are becoming more social and more interactive with others, but the style of that communication has changed so that we're not meeting face-to-face as often as we used to.

In China, People often use WeChat, QQ, MSN or micro blog to communicate thinking, life, learning and work on the internet. Among

them, WeChat is one of the most widely used social software in smart phones. College students are the biggest social networking group using WeChat.窗体顶端窗体底端

WeChat is a mobile phone communication software launched by Tencent Inc in January 2011. As a new ecological media, WeChat is

more and more popular among people, especially college students, because of its less traffic consumption, higher compatibility and more innovative mode of information dissemination. Each function of it can satisfy the most basic psychological appeal of the user making friends, such as "search for nearby people", "shake", WeChat voice, video calls, friends circle interaction, etc. As a new type of interpersonal relationship, Internet social interaction is influencing people's traditional social patterns and ideas with powerful influence. Online social interaction also plays an increasingly important role in the study and life of College students. It not only influences the mode of life and interpersonal communication of college students, but also constructs a completely new virtual world for college students. Everything has two sides, and social networking is a double-edged sword, It has both positive and negative effects on College Students' interpersonal communication.

In the field of WeChat application research, there are few authoritative research results. Recently, the research on WeChat has mainly focused on three aspects: First, the introduction and analysis of WeChat function; second, the thinking of WeChat marketing; third, analysis of the problems in WeChat communication. As a

new type of social networking tool, what is the status of college students using WeChat? Is it popularized and widely used to promote or hinder the interpersonal communication among college students? This study focuses on some issues.

METHOD

Participant

560 college students who used WeChat were given questionnaires of which 539 (96.3%) were returned (male=222; females=317; mean age= 20.25±0.59).

Measures

A Demographic Questionnaire

A demographic questionnaire elicited basic background information including age, gender, academic major, parental marital status, single-child family or not, single parent family or not, family socioeconomic status (SES), family history of mental illness, and other basic demographic information.

Wechat Information

Participants with active WeChat accounts reported WeChat's durable years, the time spent every day, the total number friends in their WeChat address book, how many likes and comments their current profile picture has received, and how many likes and comments their profile pictures tend to receive on average, etc.

Interpersonal Relationship Integrative Diagnostic Scale

Interpersonal Relationship Integrative Diagnostic Scale is a diagnostic scale for interpersonal behaviors disturbances (Zheng, Richang, 1999) with 28 question items. The scale has four dimensions including the level of distress in conversation, the condition of being in contact with one another, on the way of getting along with people and the relationship with the opposite sex. Each item of the scale has two options, "yes" and "no". When the answer is "yes", it gets 1 point, and the answer to "no" is 0 points. The higher the total score of the subjects, the more serious the interpersonal relationship suffered. The internal consistency reliability was 0.89 and construct validity was 0.67.

The Social Anxiety Scale

The social anxiety scale was revised by Scheier and Carver (1985). The social anxiety can be defined as feeling uncomfortable in front of other people. The social anxiety scale contained 6 entries, and the answer was scored by 5 grades. These 6 items measure not only subjective anxiety, but also difficulty in verbal expression and behavior. The scale, although called social anxiety, is actually more than anxiety itself. The occasions described in the scale include strange occasions, being stared at, embarrassing events, conversations with strangers, public speeches, and a large crowd. The social anxiety scale was generated in the process of preparing self consciousness scale. The score was 6, indicating low anxiety and 30 points indicated high anxiety. The α coefficient is 0.79.

The Affect Scales

The affect scales comprises two mood scales, one that measures positive affect and the other which measures negative affect. The 10 items describe the feelings of the past few weeks. The positive affect item replied "yes", it gets 1 points,; negative affect answer "no" also gets 1 points. The calculation of the affect balance is the positive emotional scores minus negative emotional scores, plus a coefficient of 5, so the score is from 1 to 9. The less you score, the more balanced you are. The α coefficient are 0.83 and 0.81respectively.

RESULTS

Sample Characteristics

70.3% of participants came from urban area and the remaining were from countryside. 41.2% of them came from one-child family, 8.4% of them came from single parent family, 77.7% of them were above average in the family economic level, and 79.6% of their living expenses were above 1000 RMB per month. 82.2% of their academic record was above average. The education level of most of the parents was low. Most of the subjects were self-evaluation well.

Correlations Analysis on the Factors of Wechat Usage, Interpersonal Relationship, Social Anxiety and Emotional Balance

Table1 lists the variables whose correlation coefficients with WeChat usage, interpersonal relationship, social anxiety and emotional balance were significant. Insignificant variables were omitted.

The Impact Study of WeChat on College Students' Interpersonal Communication

Table1. *Correlations Coefficient of the Factors Wechat Usage,Interpersonal Relationship, Social Anxiety and Emotional Balance（r，n=536)*

FACTOR	Talking trouble	Communication trouble	Treat people troubled	Heterosexual contacts troubled	Total Relationship	Social anxiety	Affect balance	Positive affect	Negative affect
WeChat used years	-.124**	-.065	.086*	-.138**	-.088*	-.182**	-.059	-.094*	.002
Used minutes per day	-.091*	-.016	.034	-.041	-.041	-.146**	.022	.048	.009
Brush frequency	-.063	-.037	.006	-.023	-.040	-.041	.046	.073	-.002
WeChat /Net ration	-.091*	-.039	-.010	-.121**	-.085*	-.198**	-.024	.070	.077
Eased than face to face	.028	.004	-.001	.060	.030	-.043	-.029	.077	.089*
Address book friend number	.107*	.066	.066	.094*	.106*	-.267**	.001	.084	.059
Often contact friend number	-.043	-.074	.004	-.046	-.055	-.234**	-.086*	.058	.142**
Get like number	-.110*	-.145**	.048	-.087*	-.105*	-.097*	-.076	.031	.110*
Average get like number	-.092*	-.080	.063	-.108*	-.078	-.323**	-.088*	.123**	.189**
Hope like number	-.136**	-.075	.051	-.075	-.083	-.043	.106*	.065	-.078
Mutual comment situation	.069	.085*	.079	.049	.089*	-.139**	-.002	.057	.043
Get further communication	.105*	.113**	.044	.063	.106*	-.072	.006	.055	.032
Let friend know your state	.099*	.010	-.007	-.001	.034	-.056	.066	.072	-.026
Record your life	-.091*	-.105*	.046	-.102*	-.090*	-.083	.043	.103*	.023
Other thing	-.059	-.039	.066	-.110*	-.052	-.030	-.065	-.039	.048
Give like reason	-.047	-.021	-.047	-.061	-.055	.046	.009	-.097*	-.079
Give like number	-.133**	-.079	.032	-.112**	-.101*	-.124**	-.014	.036	.042
Average give like number	-.116**	-.047	-.077	-.128**	-.116**	-.162**	-.062	.060	.114**
Get like degree	-.184**	-.180**	.064	-.198**	-.174**	-.155**	.050	.164**	.059
Get comment degree	-.180**	-.173**	-.072	-.170**	-.195**	-.128**	.030	.115**	.047
Give like ration	-.136**	-.139**	-.005	-.107*	-.131**	.097*	.085	.037	-.073
Give comment ration	-.233**	-.245**	-.020	-.259**	-.253**	.120**	.045	.014	-.043
Share content frequency	-.067	-.036	.084	-.108*	-.049	-.156**	.083	.100*	-.026
Care get reply	.011	-.099*	-.057	-.029	-.056	-.016	-.161**	-.148**	.083
Get like attitude	-.122**	-.144**	-.196**	-.128**	-.183**	-.067	-.210**	-.095*	.177**
Care image	-.144**	-.179**	-.215**	-.143**	-.212**	-.067	-.165**	-.078	.137**
WeChat dependence level	-.088*	-.035	.043	-.137**	-.075	-.106*	.024	.079	.028
Changes in touch with friends	.050	.004	-.064	.016	.007	.072	-.104*	-.136**	.025
Changes in intimacy with friends	.043	.057	-.025	.041	.042	.087*	-.011	-.091*	-.052
Change real communication	.139**	.163**	.114**	.090*	.162**	.136**	.123**	.021	-.130**
WeChat friends trust degree	.089*	.063	-.002	.054	.069	.076	-.002	-.088*	-.060

** p＜0.01, *p＜0.05

According to table 1:

There is a negative correlation between talking trouble and years of WeChat usage, using minutes per day, WeChat takes up time on the Internet, got like number, hoping like number , record life, give like number, got like degree, got comment degree, give like friendly relationship, give comment friendly relationship, get like attitude, care about image and dependence

WeChat level, and there is a positive correlation between talking trouble and address book numbers, further communication, knowing state and attitude toward real communication.

There is a negative correlation between communication trouble and got like number, Record life, got like degree, got comment degree, give like friendly relationship, give comment friendly relationship, Care about reply, get like attitude and care about image, and there is a positive correlation between communication trouble and mutual comments, further communication and attitude toward real communication.

There is a negative correlation between treat people troubled and get like attitude ,care about image, and there is a positive correlation between treat people troubled and years of WeChat usage, attitude toward real communication.

There is a negative correlation between heterosexual contacts troubled and years of WeChat usage, WeChat takes up time on the Internet, got like number, record life, give like number, got like degree, got comment degree, give like friendly relationship, give comment friendly relationship, share content frequency, get like attitude, care about image, and dependence WeChat level, and there is a positive correlation between heterosexual contacts troubled and address book numbers, attitude toward real communication; There is a negative correlation between total relationship score and years of WeChat usage, WeChat takes up time on the Internet, got like number, Hoping like number , record life, give like number, got like degree, got comment degree, give like friendly relationship, give comment friendly relationship, get like attitude and care about image, and there is a positive correlation between total relationship score and address book numbers, mutual comments , further communication, and attitude toward real communication.

There is a negative correlation between social anxiety and years of WeChat usage, using minutes per day, WeChat takes up time on the Internet, address book numbers, often contact number, got like number, mutual comments, got like degree, got comment degree, give like friendly relationship, give comment friendly relationship, share content frequency, and dependence WeChat level, and there is a positive correlation between social anxiety and attitude toward real communication.

There is a negative correlation between affect balance and often contact number, got like number, hoping like number , care about reply, get like attitude, care about image, contact change with friends, and there is a positive correlation between affect balance and attitude toward real communication.

There is a negative correlation between positive affect and years of WeChat usage, give like reason, care about reply, get like attitude, contact change with friends, change in relationships with friends and WeChat friends trust, and there is a positive correlation between positive affect and got like number, record life, give like reason got like degree, got comment degree, share content frequency, and attitude toward real communication.

There is a negative correlation between negative affect and WeChat being more comfortable than face-to-face communication, often contact number, got like number, get like attitude and care about image, and there is a positive correlation between negative affect and attitude toward real communication.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the earlier the students began to use WeChat, the more time they used every day, the higher the ratio of online time, the lower the possibility of interpersonal behavior disturbance and the lower social anxiety level. That is to say, students who often used WeChat had less trouble in making friends. They were good at getting along with friends, and getting lots of favor and approval. Mainly in the aspects of conversation distress, communication problems, problems and the way of getting along with people with opposite friends troubled was low degree. The subjects had relatively high conversational skills and are able to communicate their thoughts and feelings in the right way of conversation; the subjects in terms of interpersonal communication were more sincere and enthusiastic towards people and their interpersonal relationships were more harmonious; The subjects in the way of getting along with people were more respect for others, responsibility, strong adaptability to the environment, and often obtained a lot of good opinion and approval because of sincere, tolerant, responsible; the subjects with the opposite sex friends, knew how to deal with the relationship between the friends of the opposite sex, naturally can openly interact with them, get a lot

of friends and enrich your personality. The students who use WeChat regularly had low levels of social anxiety, that is, they would not feel uncomfortable in front of others.

The research indicated that the subjects often used WeChat took styles of mutual praise, comments, and interactive feelings with friends, and these behaviors is conducive to interpersonal communication and friendship.

The study also showed that "like" and critical behavior acted as a sign of close friendship. The strong desire of point praise and comments, the better interpersonal relationship, and social anxiety level is low. People who were highly dependent on WeChat had better relationships and lower social anxiety levels.

The results of this study suggested that students who were very concerned about personal images when using WeChat had more negative emotions.

In conclusion, the use of WeChat has a positive effect on College Students' interpersonal behavior, and can lower social anxiety levels, but the effect on mood is negative.

REFERENCES

[1] Bradburn. N. (1969).The structure of psychological well-being. Chicago: Aldine.

[2] Keller, M. (2013). Social Media and Interpersonal Communication .Social Work Today,13(3),10

[3] Liang L., Chao X. (1998). Research on Evaluation of College Students' Achievement Motivation and Achievement Behaviors. Psychological Science, 21(4), 377-378

[4] Fenigstein, A., Scheier, M.F., & Buss. A.H. (1975).Public and private self-consciousness: Assessment and theory. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology,43,522-527

[5] Scheier , M.F., & Carve. C.S(1985).The self-consciousness scale: revised version for use with general populations. Journal of applied social psychology.15.687-699

[6] Zheng, R. (1999). College students' psychological diagnosis. Ji'nan: Shandong Education Press, 199-201