A Study on Parent-Child Interactions in Rural TikTok Videos in China

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Abstract: Rural short videos offer a new perspective on parent-child relationships. This study analyzes the elements, types, and characteristics of parent-child interactions in rural short videos and explores the issues and causes behind them. Through content analysis and case studies, the study reveals the unique and common challenges of parent-child interactions within the rural cultural context and explains these issues from the perspectives of media technology and commercial capital. Recommendations are provided for content creators and short video platforms to improve the quality of parent-child interactions, enhancing their educational and social value.

Keywords: Rural short videos; Parent-child interactions; Content analysis

Introduction

With the increasing popularity of rural short videos, the portrayal of parent-child relationships has become a research focus. This study aims to fill the gaps in existing research by deeply analyzing parent-child interactions in rural short videos, offering insights for understanding and enhancing rural parent-child relationships.

1. Research Background

The rapid development of the internet and mobile technologies has significantly transformed daily life. As of June 2024, China had 1.1 billion internet users, with 95.5% using short video platforms. Short videos have quickly become a major channel for entertainment and information, profoundly impacting social and cultural communication. This trend has created new media opportunities for rural areas, where residents use short video platforms to express themselves and document their lives, playing a crucial role in depicting family and parent-child relationships.

While previous research has explored the role of rural short videos in scene depiction, character development, and cultural value, it has mostly focused on content display and narrative techniques, lacking in-depth analysis of parent-child relationships. Moreover, existing studies have not fully addressed the impact of rural cultural contexts on these interactions. This study seeks to bridge these gaps by systematically analyzing the characteristics of parent-child relationships in rural short videos and the social and cultural factors influencing them, offering new theoretical perspectives and recommendations for improving the quality of rural parent-child interactions.

2. Research Innovations

Thematic Innovation: This study is the first to deeply examine the types and characteristics of parent-child interactions in rural short videos, filling a gap in the existing literature and revealing the deeper significance of these interactions within social change.

Perspective Innovation: By focusing on parent-child relationships in rural short videos, this study goes beyond traditional communication strategies and narrative analysis, extending the research perspective to this emerging media form, offering new pathways for studying parent-child relationships.

3. Content Analysis of Rural Parent-Child Short Videos

This chapter explores parent-child interactions in rural short videos through content analysis. After defining the research questions, representative parent-child interaction videos from TikTok were selected for analysis. Video categories were constructed, and basic features were analyzed to present the multidimensional nature of parent-child interactions.

3.1 Research Questions

This study systematically analyzes the elements and types of parent-child interactions in rural short videos, exploring the main issues and their causes. The goal is to optimize content, enhancing its educational and social value.

3.2 Video Category Construction

To investigate how parent-child interactions are presented in rural short videos and their impact on viewers, this study constructed video categories based on titles, duration, and likes, systematically analyzing the presentation and popularity of these interactions.

3.3 Basic Feature Analysis

3.3.1 Appropriate Video Duration

Analysis shows that most parent-child short videos last between 1 to 3 minutes (see Figure 1). This duration captures viewers' attention while preventing fatigue. A balanced duration effectively conveys the warmth and educational value of parent-child interactions. Content creators should find a balance between video length, information delivery, and emotional expression.
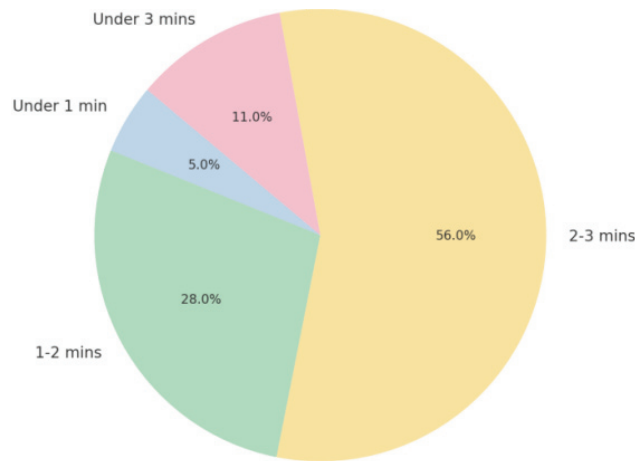

Figure 1. Analysis of the duration of parent-child short videos

3.3.2 Parent-Child Element Title Analysis

The precision and appeal of titles significantly impact viewer response. The study found that although "parent-child activities" videos are most numerous, "parent-child education" videos received higher likes, indicating greater viewer value. (see Figure 2)Titles related to parent-child education not only enhance the educational significance of videos but also improve their spread among parent groups. Therefore, content creators should design titles that highlight parent-child elements to boost the social influence and educational value of videos.
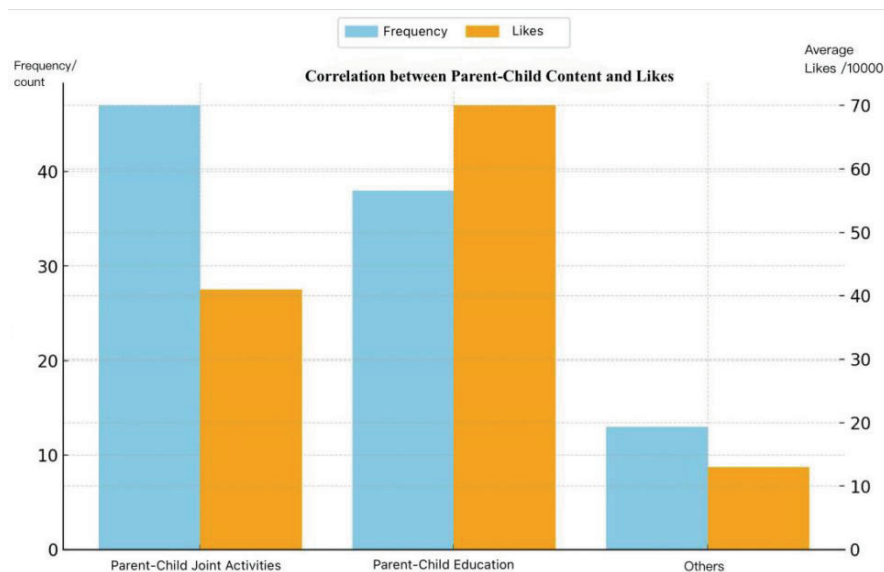

Figure 2. Correlation between Parent Child Title Content and Like Count

3.4 Classification of Basic Elements in Rural Parent-Child Short Videos

This section classifies parent-child interactions in rural short videos, analyzing them from three dimensions: interaction forms, character roles, and life scenes. The goal is to construct a basic framework for understanding parent-child interactions in rural short videos.

3.4.1 Diversity of Parent-Child Interaction Forms

Parent-child interactions are diverse, including emotional communication, joint activities, and educational interactions. Emotional communication strengthens family bonds through expressions of love and care; joint activities like farming and cooking reinforce family ties and responsibility; educational interactions are reflected in both parents guiding children and children responding to parents' behaviors, demonstrating the bidirectional nature of education.

3.4.2 Diversity of Parent-Child Roles

Parents and children in rural short videos exhibit various roles, reflecting the diversity of family life. Parents are shown as busy workers or caring family members, while children range from needing love to being optimistic and cheerful, revealing the complexity and authenticity of parent-child relationships.

3.4.3 Rural Family Life Scenes

Rural short videos showcase farming activities and daily family life, illustrating the diligence and values of rural families. Farming activities like plowing and fishing display the labor spirit and emotional connection to the land; daily activities like cooking reflect the interaction and emotional exchange between family members, enhancing viewers' understanding of rural lifestyles and values.

4. Issues, Causes, and Recommendations for Parent-Child Interactions in Rural Short Videos

This chapter first identifies the main issues in parent-child interactions in rural short videos, including content homogeneity, imbalanced child identities, and the intrusion of consumerism. It then explores the underlying drivers of these problems, such as audience psychological needs, advances in media technology, and commercial influences. Finally, it offers recommendations to promote the healthy development of parent-child relationships in rural short videos.

4.1 Problems in Rural Parent-Child Short Videos

4.1.1 Content Homogeneity in Rural Short Videos

Despite the increasing popularity of rural short videos, content homogeneity has become a significant issue. Parent-child interactions often repeat similar plots and character roles, sometimes even manufacturing family conflicts, leading to viewer fatigue. This limits the diversity of parent-child relationships, failing to meet varied audience needs, and contributes to market stagnation and user attrition. Many videos are presented as narratives or cooking shows, but they lack innovation, with evident scripted elements and unnatural performances, further exacerbating homogeneity and reducing user engagement.

4.1.2 Imbalanced Child Identities in Parent-Child Interactions

Advertisers are increasingly exploiting children's potential in the consumer market, leading to the over-commercialization of children in short videos, where they are portrayed with adult-like behaviors, undermining their authenticity and innocence. Whether participating in performances or watching short videos, children are engaged in "digital labor, " losing the opportunity for proper play and growth in a traffic-driven environment.

4.1.3 Consumerism Intrusion

Parent-child relationships in rural short videos have become part of a commercialized symbolic economy, where not just goods but also emotions are commodified. Rural short videos cater to urban audiences' entertainment needs by showcasing rural parent-child interactions, offering a form of emotional solace. However, this emotional consumption ultimately turns viewers into "emotional laborers, " drawn into the vortex of consumerism.

5. Causes of Issues in Rural Parent-Child Short Videos

5.1 Audience Needs: Rural Family Scenes Relieving Urban Nostalgia

Urban viewers' longing for rural life, exacerbated by rapid urbanization, drives their preference for idealized rural scenes. However, this can lead to over-embellishment by creators, affecting the authenticity of videos and pushing content towards mere entertainment, transforming parent-child interactions from educational moments into simple visual consumption.

5.2 Media Technology Catalysis: Grassroots Expression of Parent-Child Interactions in Rural Short Videos

The accessibility of video creation tools has democratized content production among rural residents. While this has diversified content, it has also led to homogeneity and over-entertainment, lacking depth and innovation.

5.3 Commercial Influence: The Dual Impact of Short Video Platforms and Rural Content Creators

The expansion of short video platforms and support policies has stimulated rural content creation. However, the pursuit of clicks and profits has led some creators to fabricate unrealistic scenes, misleading viewers and diminishing the educational and cultural value of the con-

tent. This trend challenges the quality and authenticity of the content, necessitating attention from creators, platforms, and regulatory bodies.

6. Recommendations

To address these challenges, content creators should innovate and avoid homogeneity, drawing on authentic rural culture and emotional elements to enhance viewer engagement. Creators must ensure authenticity in their portrayal of emotions and avoid exploiting children for commercial gain, reinforcing child protection. Short video platforms should increase support for high-quality content while strengthening content review processes to limit children's involvement in commercial activities, ensuring the authenticity and educational value of parent-child interactions.

7. Conclusion

This chapter's analysis and recommendations highlight the crucial role of content creators and platforms in fostering healthy parent-child relationships. Through content innovation and enhanced regulation, we can improve the quality of short videos, promote children's healthy development in the digital age, and ensure the positive transmission of social and cultural values.

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