

# *The Impact of Juvenileization in New Media Exposure on Cultivating Children's Social Norm Cognition*

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**Keywords:** New Media, Juvenileization Media Exposure, Social Rules, Cognitive Influence

**Abstract:** In this era of digital information, electronic media has accompanied children from the very moment of their birth, becoming an inseparable companion. We can no longer perceive media as mere entertainment tools for the new generation. The influence and control wielded by media upon children far surpass our imagination—regardless of whether it is a scene from an animated film, a snippet of dialogue in a short video, or an image from a television series, each has the potential to etch a profound impression in a child's mind. These subtle imprints gradually shape their understanding of complex societal norms, weaving together a tapestry of cognitive impressions associated with the term "rules." Children represent the future of nations, and new media serve as a vital conduit for their exposure to external information. However, despite the pivotal role it plays, scholarly research on children's social norm cognition within the context of the media environment remains scarce both domestically and internationally. This article investigates the current landscape of media exposure among children and delves into how we can ensure that young people benefit from the blessings of information technology while avoiding the potential negative repercussions that may accompany it.

## **1. Introduction**

The new media cultural ecosystem embodies characteristics such as diversity, openness, individual expression, normative constraints, and competitive innovation, which align well with the fundamental traits of civil society [1]. This study investigated the impact of early media exposure on the development of children's social rule cognition and provided new directions for future research in this field. The study focuses on children aged 7 to 12 years and utilizes a self-compiled survey questionnaire that combines self-administered questionnaires with interviews. Based on interviews with children, hypotheses regarding the impact mechanisms of media exposure on the cultivation of their social rule cognition are proposed using a semi-structured interview outline. The research design is informed by these hypotheses, research objectives, and literature reviews. After conducting four formal surveys, a sample of 20 children aged 6 to 10 years was randomly selected for data collection and analysis: (1) Early exposure to media facilitates social rule cognition in children and exhibits certain age-related differences; (2) Based on the experimental results, we propose recommendations for further developing theoretical models in this field; and (3) The conclusions drawn from

experimental results also offer insights for educational practice.

Currently, both domestic and international research has focused primarily on the relationship between media exposure and social rule cognition. In the domestic context, there is limited literature in this field, mostly centered around specific cases. However, these cases exhibit significant variability and unique characteristics. Within the domestic research landscape, two viewpoints regarding the impact of media exposure on social rule cognition have emerged. Some scholars argue that media materials significantly influence individuals' physical and mental development. They emphasize the importance of media exposure during childhood and its role in shaping social expectations, cooperative spirit, and positive social interaction patterns. The media serve as a crucial pillar in the formation and development of human moral systems. Another perspective posits that media materials moderately impact children's social rule cognition. Researchers highlight the significance of childhood exposure to media and advocate for cultivating children's interest in media during early education.

Given the ongoing debate between these viewpoints, it is essential to conduct further in-depth research on media exposure at an early age. By doing so, we can explore new methods and approaches to address the challenges of social rule enlightenment.

## 2. Formulation of the Research Question

### 2.1 Main Theoretical Foundations

Children construct their knowledge of social rules through actual social interactions, and this process is continually evolving [2]. From a psychological perspective, social rules represent meaningful values and behavioural norms. The core elements of social rules include three aspects:

**Self-Efficacy:** Refers to an individual's confidence in his or her own or others' behaviour.

**Rule Sensitivity:** This indicator of an individual's ability to adhere to specific regulations or guidelines in their behaviour.

**Social Support:** These factors collectively influence an individual's attitudes toward their performance in interpersonal relationships.

Recent research suggests that low social rule cognition can have implications for children's future development. The literature on children's cognitive mechanisms primarily focuses on two aspects: (1) the cognitive science framework, which describes and analyses the mechanisms of rule cognition in children based on cognitive science theories, and (2) social-emotional education theory, which investigates the impact effects of these mechanisms.

In recent years, research on the mechanisms underlying children's social rules has become a hot topic in the field of psychology, and related theories have garnered significant attention from psychologists.

### 2.2 Research Hypotheses

This study is based on the two main theories mentioned above and proposes the following hypotheses: (1) social rules are negatively correlated with children's self-efficacy, i.e., high levels of self-efficacy promote individuals' compliance with social rules; (2) social rules at low levels are more conducive to enhancing children's self-efficacy and fostering good interpersonal relationships; (3) high levels of perceived social rules are more conducive to promoting individual compliance with social rules and regulations at low levels; (4) compliance with social rules requires high levels of competence, which need to be supported by low levels of self-efficacy; and (5) low levels of self-esteem have a positive effect on compliance with social rules and regulations.

According to the assumptions mentioned above, this study divided children into different age

groups. The results revealed that, from an age perspective, younger children are more willing to adhere to social norms compared to older children, which aligns with the questions posed in the theoretical section. Additionally, this study found further agreement with the following viewpoint: the younger individuals are, the more inclined they are to follow social rules. In this process, high levels of self-efficacy positively influence compliance with social rules, while lower levels have a negative impact. The research also discovered that younger children are more likely to experience psychological satisfaction, such as respect and obedience, which is related to their cognitive understanding of social rules. The proposition of juvenileization media exposure among children arises from research findings that suggest that younger individuals, compared to older age groups, are more receptive to novel concepts and behavioural patterns.

### **2.3 Impact of Age Differences and the Environment of Growth**

This study suggested that children perceive the same object differently at various age stages. For example, at the early age stage, understanding of objects is limited. What's more, younger individuals exhibit lower acceptance of social norms. Due to a weaker awareness of social rules, younger individuals are more receptive to new behavioural approaches. Therefore, this research posits that younger children have more opportunities to encounter novel experiences, alter their behaviour patterns, and adapt their cognitive mechanisms. This phenomenon also contributes to an increase in self-efficacy.

Children's developmental environments differ significantly from those of adults, particularly in terms of cognitive aspects [3]. External factors, such as parental attitudes, teacher influence, and peer interactions, also impact children's differentiation of various social rules. Specifically, within the family environment, parents often pay more attention to their children. For instance, parents are more concerned about children's safety and health. In school settings, students focus more on teachers and educational content. Social environments, including school education models and family upbringing methods, may also influence children.

In family education, parents should emphasize children's life skill learning, cultivate hobbies, and promote good habits. A positive family environment increased parental cognitive support, increased socioeconomic status, and shared media participation play protective roles in the relationship between children's digital media use and executive functions [4]. However, in school education, teachers tend to overlook students' academic performance and physical health. This research shows that these factors also impact children's social rule cognition, both positively and negatively.

### **2.4 Research Validation**

Personalized communication behaviors can lead to information dissemination without central or authoritative development, resulting in increasingly complex cognition among young children. Given the focus on the younger age group in this study, the experimental design is representative and feasible for several reasons: first, the research targets a younger age group; second, the experimental design method is straightforward and effective; and third, starting from interview experiments allows better validation of hypotheses and provides new directions for future experiments. This research will enhance our understanding of the learning environment for young children and the impact mechanisms on social rule cognition, offering insights for educational practices.

### **3. Implications and Objective of the Research**

#### **3.1 Research Implications**

Personalized dissemination behaviors can lead to an information propagation process characterized by decentralization and the absence of authority, resulting in the increasingly intricate cognition of adolescents and children [5]. In recent years, the concept of “juvenileization media exposure” has been introduced into the field of educational research, garnering significant attention and discourse among scholars. Within the domain of child education, the influence of traditional culture often skews the understanding of child education toward mere “knowledge.” Unfortunately, this emphasis may inadvertently give rise to factors detrimental to the wholesome growth of children. As societal demands for educational quality continue to escalate, the focus on early childhood education and strategies for nurturing sound social norms in children has become increasingly paramount.

#### **3.2 Research Objectives**

This research delves into the cognitive cultivation of social norms during the process of nurturing children’s socialization. As investigations into the concept of “juvenileization media exposure” have deepened, an increasing number of scholars have posited that if children are exposed to abundant external information resources, they are more likely to perceive themselves and others, thereby fostering sound social norms and enhancing their own refinement and social interaction capabilities. By synthesizing and summarizing the concept of “media exposure” within the realm of child socialization and juxtaposing it with theoretical models and specific measures proposed in recent domestic and international research on cultivating children’s understanding of positive social norms, the following research objectives emerge.

(1) Novel approaches and theoretical models for investigating “juvenileization media exposure”. From an educational theory perspective, the concept of “media exposure” primarily pertains to socialization, interpersonal interactions, and individual value systems. Its pivotal role in enhancing children’s social interaction abilities is underscored.

(2) To explore the impact of digital media on children’s social norm cognition from a family media ecological perspective. By examining media characteristics, family environment features, and individual traits, we can discern how digital media influences children’s understanding of social norms. Pertinent recommendations can be formulated for behaviors such as prolonged exposure to media.

(3) Unpacking the influence of media content on children’s social norm cognition in real-life scenarios. By delving into the educational and media illusory aspects, we can further explore how media content affects children’s comprehension of social norms. This endeavour complements and enriches existing theoretical explanations regarding the impact of digital media on children’s social norm development.

In this scholarly pursuit, we illuminate pathways for understanding childhood media exposure, scrutinize media effects, and advocate for holistic approaches to nurturing socially adept and ethically grounded young minds.

### **4. Research Methods**

#### **4.1 Introduction to Methods**

When investigating the phenomenon of “juvenileization media exposure”, a comprehensive

research approach can be employed, combining interviews, questionnaires, and street surveys. In this study, we rely on both literature reviews and self-designed interview questionnaires. Throughout the data collection process, we employed a semi-structured interview outline. Our primary methodology involves a fusion of questionnaire-based research and interview-based investigation. When surveying children, we initially utilized a semi-structured interview outline to explore specific aspects related to their cognition of social norms, the impact of media exposure on children, and theoretical models within this domain.

During the first round of interviews, face-to-face interactions with participants provided insights into their attitudes toward social norm cognition, cognitive inclinations, and the pivotal role of social norms in their personal development. Subsequently, in the second round of interviews, we delved into participants' perspectives on theoretical models within this field, encompassing educational effects and the influence of media exposure. The third round of interviews captures recent shifts in participants' understanding of social norms. Finally, during the fourth round of interviews, we seamlessly integrated data collection for our self-designed interview questionnaires while engaging in meaningful conversations with the participants.

#### **4.2 Design of the Experimental Interview**

The present study adopts a semi-structured interview outline as its foundational research framework. Drawing from prior investigations into childhood media exposure, we integrate questionnaire survey results and interview content to devise a specific research plan. The initial interview, guided by the outline, involved face-to-face communication and in-depth discussions with participants. Based on their responses, we refined and incorporate relevant elements into the subsequent questionnaires. The second round of interviews supplemented the questionnaire data, adapting the outline to suit different child profiles and employing varied questioning techniques during the third interview. The fourth interview, informed by both the second survey and the outline, facilitates profound exchanges with participants, revealing their perspectives and desired outcomes post-research. Our research methodology progresses from questionnaire-based inquiries in the first phase to outline-guided interviews with an additional face-to-face interaction in the second phase. Subsequent rounds delve deeper, culminating in a formal investigation during the fourth phase. Ultimately, we have meticulously crafted a semi-structured, comprehensive research framework aligned with our design principles and procedural requirements.

#### **5. Analysis and Conclusion**

The experiment employed a randomized sampling method to engage in face-to-face interactions with the interviewed children. Following each formal research session, meticulous semi-structured interview records were maintained and subsequently organized. Throughout the study, a comprehensive array of experimental materials, including questionnaires and interviews, was utilized. Our research primarily encompasses the dynamics between interviewees and investigators, feedback from interviewees, and content analysis by the researchers. Within this framework, we scrutinized aspects such as childhood cognition of social norms, children's engagement with diverse media types, the media exposure environment, and the duration of exposure [6]. By meticulously analysing the interview content from 30 participants, the following insights emerged:

(1) Factors such as family structure, parental media habits, and attitudes, can significantly influence young children's engagement with electronic media.

(2) The younger the age at which children are exposed to the media environment, the more positively it contributes to the development of social rule cognition. As the degree of juvenileization media exposure increases, children exhibit heightened social norm cognition during interactions with

others. This positive effect extends to the cultivation of social norm understanding.

(3) Children's ability to interact with others increased significantly at younger ages but was still lower than that of other age groups.

Through the analysis, the following conclusions can be drawn: (1) younger children's media exposure is conducive to the development of their social rule cognition but does not change with age, and (2) the relevant conclusions drawn through the experiment also provide some insights for educational practice. In addition, this study also makes the following suggestions for further similar studies in the future, such as the relationship model between children's media-touching at an early age and the development of their social rule cognition can be analysed from the perspective of theoretical modelling, and the model needs to be further validated, and more conclusions that are beneficial to the field can be drawn through the analysis of experimental data.

## 6. Conclusions

From this study, we discern that adeptly navigating new media is an essential skill for children growing up in the digital era [7]. Simultaneously, the phenomenon of juvenileization media exposure augments the cultivation of their social norm cognition, exhibiting nuanced age-related variations. Furthermore, our research charts a novel trajectory for the future development of the field of juvenileization media exposure. Following interviews with children, we propose a hypothesis regarding the impact mechanisms of media exposure on the cultivation of social norm cognition, grounded in a semi-structured interview outline. Based on our research results, we offer the following recommendations for the field of childhood education:

(1) Some theoretical models of children's social rule cognition can be developed to help readers understand this theoretical system by developing new methods based on the existing relevant theoretical models.

(2) For the existing research on children's social rule cognition, it is necessary to expand under the guidance of existing methods, such as the theory of educational psychology, which can be used as an effective tool to help students understand and master the cognitive mechanism of social rules in educational practice.

Our conclusions also provide valuable insights for educational practitioners, particularly in fostering students' awareness of social norms. However, certain limitations persist. For instance, our sample may not fully represent the diverse characteristics of different age groups, genders, and regions. While we designed experimental materials based on our research results, other influential factors on social norm cognition mechanisms remain unexplored. As we strive for scholarly rigor, we anticipate addressing these limitations in future work.

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