

The Gossip of Celebrities Educates Generation Z Based on the Life Skills

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ABSTRACT

The goal of the research is to find how the life skills of generation Z developed after exposure to celebrities' gossip of celebrities. The methodology used for this research project is a qualitative research method, in-person, in-depth interview (IDIs). Responses are analyzed using the method of thematic analysis and the criteria, divided according to the 12 elements of four main categories: active citizenship, learning, personal empowerment, and employability. The results illustrate that the gossip of celebrities would help develop different abilities of Life Skills depending on whether generation Z are fans or not. One is when generation Z exposes to celebrities' gossip. Fans learn more dimensions than non-fans. The pattern suggests that fans have thought more profoundly than non-fans. The other is that fans learn more about active citizenship than non-fans, especially with respect for diversity. In addition, fans may have a more vital ability to accept new things. Apart from that, fans are educated prominently in personal empowerment because they need to experience the sadness and bounce back from the negative scandal. In addition, fans and non-fans have learned equally in employability and learning. This research recommends that the educational industry, like the high schools, pays attention to celebrities' recent gossip, which can arouse students' deep thinking about society and themselves.

Keywords: *Education, Generation Z, Agent system, Life Skills, Gossip of Celebrities.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The definition of Gossip is "idle talk or rumor, especially about the personal or private affairs of others [1]". Therefore, each of us lives in a world of Gossip. In other words, Gossip is ubiquitous in human life since it is inevitable that people talk about others when sharing news or texts between friends and family. Historically, Gossip is defined as fundamental to our society. Additionally, "Gossip is not a trivial pastime: it is essential to human social, psychological and even physical well-being" [2]. Therefore, gossip is quite significant to our daily lives. Besides, there are two kinds of Gossip that we usually talk about. One is relative to own private life, and another is from celebrities that have a more substantial influence on public opinion. However, people may not realize that the gossip of celebrities influences them.

Life skills aid people to "find new ways of thinking and problem-solving. Recognize the impact of their actions and teaches them to take responsibility for what they do rather than blame others. Build confidence both in verbal skills and for group collaboration and

cooperation [3] ". For generation Z, it is essential to develop their life skills. Nonetheless, it is a high cost for the young to build their life skills in reality. They need to sacrifice their time, money, and emotion to learn a little knowledge. For example, young people usually understand how to handle the relationship between couples correctly to experience different love relationships, which is a high cost. Therefore, generation Z need a better way to understand life skills.

The existing research mainly focused on the gossip of celebrities, which discusses the broad influence on society. Most of them were quantitative research while providing a broad academic background for our study. For example, Warner's concept of "a public" outlines how gossip, a private mode of communication, is used within the public sphere to create the impression of intimate exchange" [4]. This gives a broad idea of how gossip influences society and community, focusing on the communication function of the gossip—moreover, some research concentrate on the negative influence of gossip on society and human thoughts. For instance, "by conducting focus groups with teen girls, this study aimed to explore female adolescents' responses to and

perceptions of increasingly negative, scandal-driven critiquing of celebrities” [5]. This study discusses people’s subjective opinions and thoughts on gossip news, which does not mention the impact of gossip on human beings. Furthermore, previous research offers the basic understanding of gossip that “gossip is an extension of observational learning, allowing one to learn from the triumphs and misadventures of people beyond one’s immediate perceptual sphere” [6]. Thus, this research gives people an idea that people can learn from the gossip through their delicate observations. Nonetheless, little specific research connected the gossip of celebrities with the development of the Life Skills of generation Z. This research can fill this gap and be more precise, building on previous understanding of gossip.

By studying the personal thinking and attitudes of the generation Z from China on the gossip of celebrities, we will try to classify interviewees’ answers according to the image of Life Skills and criteria constructed by ourselves. Simultaneously, we analyze the particular pattern of the educational impact of gossip of celebrities, find out the misunderstanding of the gossip of celebrities, and make valuable suggestions connected with educations to the future development of gossip.

2. METHODS

By using the qualitative research method, in-person in-depth interview (IDIs) with the interviewees from generation Z from China, the interviewees of this research project are convenience samples. They are my teachers, friends, and classmates. The interview will happen in an online or face-to-face conversation. The interviewer asks the interviewee the basic information about their concern about celebrities’ gossip in the conversation. Then, based on interviewees’ hobbies and answers, the interviewer continues to ask interviewees’ ideas, feelings, deep thoughts about the recent gossip of celebrities. If they do not know the current gossip, the interviewer can explain the background to them. Additionally, interviewees could also analyze the gossip that they are interested in. Finally, interviewers correlate

the characteristics of answers from interviewees to the image of Life Skills and analyse the pattern of data by utilizing the between-subjects design of fans and non-fans.

According to Steen, “the agent system is the cognitive structure that tracks our status and progress as agents [7].” Agents use specific resources to construct their narrative structures, which aids them in overcoming the obstacles and reach the goals. Celebrities utilize their resources such as appearance, talent, and flow to build up their narrative structures. The external image in public is also known as the persona in the fan culture. There are two groups of the receivers of celebrities’ persona, commons and fans. For the commons, they understand the gossip of celebrities through the agent system. In other words, they substitute themselves into the protagonists of gossip, which helps them get closer recognitions of celebrities and the gossip. For the fans of celebrities, role modelling is another significant theory to reinforce the understanding of gossip of celebrities except for the agent system. Basing on the concept from Morgenroth and Ryan, “role models can influence both goal reinforcement and goal adoption and enhance motivation to strive toward these goals [8].” Through role modeling, fans are more accessible to perceive the gossip of celebrities from their perspective them. Specifically, people develop new knowledge from different levels based on their Life Skills as shown in figure 1. The United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) came up with the theory of life skills in 2012, which has four parts, active citizenship, learning, personal empowerment, and employability. Meanwhile, UNICEF points out that “Life skills are transferable skills that enable individuals to deal with everyday life and progress and succeed in school, work, and societal life [9].” The gossip of celebrities promotes people’s ability according to these three categories. Through the in-depth interview, fans and non-fans might represent a pattern of divergent skill areas. In general, the gossip of celebrities is an educational vehicle for both fans and non-fans. At the same time, they try to understand it with the help of the agent system and role modeling.

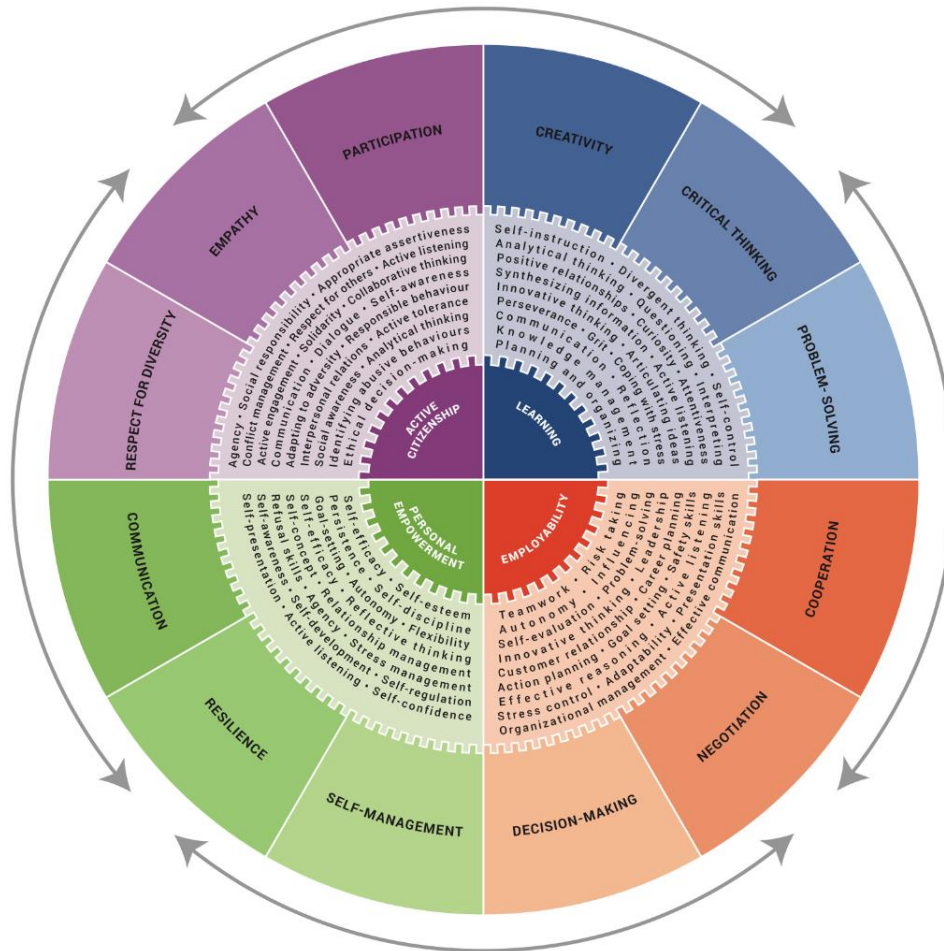


Figure 1 The image of Life Skill [9]

3. RESULTS AND DATA DISCUSSION

3.1. Fans Learn From the Gossip of Celebrities According to Life Skills

3.1.1. Fans Absorb More Knowledge of Active Citizenship

First of all, fans learn a lot in the part of active citizenship. Like the fans, they usually can't help standing on the side of the stars. This mental condition causes them to think in multiple dimensions, which might be different from the majority. Especially fans respect for diversity is one of the sub-point of active citizenship. Celebrities may have a variety of backgrounds that their fans need to understand the varied culture.

In addition, if people show up that they respect the diversity, people could accept the unique hobbies of celebrities while they attack by others. Also, they usually have tolerance to society and the ability to accept new things. For instance, for the Jeon Jung Kook from the Korean Pop group called Bangtan Sonyeondan (BTS) obtaining a big arm tattoo, we interviewed Ziggie, a fan of Jeon. She said that she could accept Jeon taking the tattoo because it is his personal choice, even though most

commons oppose Jeon's behavior of taking a tattoo. So, she will still look up to him since she loves Jeon's ability to sing and dance. (Interview with Ziggie, online, 2021-07-31). Ziggie and other fans of celebrities also represent the ability to respect new objects instead of attacking celebrities. So, fans may have a more vital ability to accept new things. The ability to respect diversity increases people's dispel negative stereotypes and personal biases about different groups.

3.1.2. Fans Understand the Personal Empowerment

Fans are educated prominently in personal empowerment. Resilience is the most significant one as the sub-point of personal empowerment, known as "the ability to withstand adversity and bounce back from difficult life events." Typically, celebrities would have negative gossip about their private life, such as divorce, break up, and property division. Their fans need to experience the sadness and bounce back from the mental cure. Fans still try to believe celebrities because they love the characteristic of celebrities in front of the camera, such as their ability, appearance, and popularity, instead of the life behind the scene. This excellent persona is built

through the agent system that they utilize their limited resources to set up.

According to the interviewee named Cloris, a fan of Kris Wu, she comes up with her opinion with the past scandal of Kris. Cloris said he had many scandals with different girls before Kris was captured into prison because of the rape. Scandal is the most harmful to Kris Wu due to his idol that many fans treat him as the boyfriend in their minds. However, as the fans, Cloris still tries to recover from these harmful scandals that she told herself that she needs to believe the image that Kris presented in front of her (interview with Cloris, online, 2021-07-31). These damaging scandals simulated the couple's relationship in reality. Since Cloris places herself as Kris's imaginary girlfriend through the agent system, she suffers several boyfriend cheating situations. However, she still bounces back from the sadness. This experience teaches her how to deal with the difficulties, sadness, and pressure in real life that she has to adjust herself. Therefore, the development of resilience improves generation Z's psychological endurance in the face of future problems.

3.2. Non-fans' Reaction to the Gossip of Celebrities

3.2.1. Unconscious Learning of Non-fans

The non-fans of celebrities usually do not have a deeper thought of gossip of celebrities. If there is, it belongs to unconscious learning. Non-fans typically do not pay special attention to the gossip unless it becomes a social event relative to the pop stars. In the lives of non-fans, gossip of celebrities is existence dispensable. However, non-fans can still learn from the Life Skills, especially from the sub-point of personal empowerment called communication, defined as "a process by which individuals exchange information through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior [10]." When non-fans decode the gossip composed by the common language system into useful information to themselves, their skill of communication increases unknowingly.

For instance, Tiffany Chen said that gossip about celebrities is the topic to talk about with friends and families. However, it can't influence her because celebrities' lives have nothing to do with her (interview with Tiffany Chen, online 2021-07-31). Tiffany's opinion clarifies that the function of gossip for her is to have more subjects to share with others. However, Tiffany does not realize that she does have to learn something from the gossip. For example, for the scandal of Kris Wu that he raped, Tiffany felt angry, and she kept emphasizing Kris's mistakes. This behavior suggests that Tiffany disagrees with what Kris Wu did to the girls; instead, Kris Wu should obey moral values and respect girls. Therefore, Tiffany learned communication of Personal Empowerment from the Life Skills from the

gossip of Kris unconsciously that males should respect females, and all the people are equal in the society. This situation also happened to other non-fans that their communication skill gets promoted. Therefore, non-fans could learn from the gossip of celebrities unconsciously based on Life Skills.

3.2.2. Rational and Objective Thinking of Non-fans to the Gossip

When non-fans comment on an explosive affair, they give their most direct thoughts as an outsider. They do so rationally and objectively because they do not have a unique, emotional, and close connection to the celebrities. Specifically, celebrities are unfamiliar to the non-fans. All the characteristics that attracted fans are meaningless to the non-fans that are unscrupulous in their opinions. So, they learn rationally and objectively from the gossip according to the Life Skills.

Take the interview with Judy Wang as an example. About the continuous exposure of idol group's love relationship and family negative information, Judy argues that the criteria for idol group screening are too low that anyone can be selected. Idols' indiscreet behavior, like a member is falling in love with multiple girls at the same time, should be resisted. Judy does not understand the crazy way that her friends, the fans of idols, chase stars that they always believe in them. Besides, the gossip tells her that moral compliance is an essential thing for everyone to follow. For the non-fans, they can see the nature of items without the fan filter. A fair attitude enables them to promote Life Skills rationally and objectively.

3.3. The Comparison Between the Knowledge that Fans and Non-fans Learn

In general, fans learn more dimensions than non-fans. There are two reasons for this. First, the pattern suggests that fans have thought more profoundly than the non-fans due to the influence of the Role Model and agent system. As Morgenroth and Ryan say, celebrities easily influence fans that reinforce the goal and adoption through role modelling. Since fans look up to celebrities, they usually choose to believe in the value of celebrities and follow them subconsciously. So, the power of role modeling influences fans' minds from multi-dimensions. Also, fans substitute themselves into the perspective of celebrities through the agent system. Thus, fans learn to think from the perspective of celebrities, not just from the audience's perspective, which promotes fans to feel much more deeply than the non-fans.

Fans and non-fans have learned equally in employability and learning. However, Through horizontal comparison, decision-making and problem-solving gain more points. This pattern supports that the gossip of celebrities increases these two abilities of young

generations no matter they are fans or not. Better life skills in decision making and problem-solving can help generation Z succeed in school and career life.

4. CONCLUSION

In today's society, generation Z obtains the gossip of celebrities from different channels such as the conversation with friends and families, social media, and daily news. The research explores the impact of the gossip of celebrities on generation Z after they expose to gossip according to the Life Skill, the necessity for the development of generation Z classifying into four categories and twelve sub-points. Specifically, generation Z's attention to gossip can be judged by distinguishing between fans and non-fans. Fans will spontaneously focus on the gossip related to their loved celebrities and publish some thoughts on social media while learning from their Life Skills. Besides, the non-fans do not pay special attention to the gossip unless others tell them, and they also believe that gossip has few influences on their lives and thinking. Still, the in-depth interview with non-fans reveals that celebrities' gossip unconsciously impacts celebrities their thinking.

The research has two future development possibilities. First, it is widely believed that much gossip about celebrities is derogatory to generation Z because it negatively affects society. However, the data results present that all interviewees have learned at least three dimensions of Life Skills. In other words, gossip has an educational function to generation Z. Additionally, the data suggests that fans have more vigorous development in the section of "active citizenship", and "personal empowerment." Thus, there is a possibility to cultivate specific skills for the young generations from the gossip. For example, teachers can talk about the recent gossip of celebrities in the classroom, which can arouse students' deep thinking.

To sum up, the gossip of celebrities offers an effective way for generation Z to acquire Life Skills in a safe environment, which are essential to their school work, career life, and social relationships. Moreover, gossip solves the problem that getting the knowledge of life skills is expensive and difficult for the young. Besides, the data collection supports my first two predictions of the hypothesis that fans learn more than the non-fans, especially in the "personal empowerment" section. Therefore, fans and non-fans have learned from different dimensions according to the image of Life Skills through the agent system and role modelling after exposure to celebrities' gossip.

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