



# Influencing Factors of Self-presentation in WeChat Moments on Youth's Anxiety

## A Grounded Research from the Perspective of Social Comparison

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**Abstract.** The influencing process and mechanism of self-presentation on social platforms on anxiety are still unknown. In this study, based on the social comparison theory and grounded theory, 15 young people were interviewed, and the influencing factors of self-presentation in Wechat moments on young people's anxiety were discussed through three-level coding. It is found that individual-centered factors in self-presentation on Wechat moments (the failure of self-satisfaction, the worry of self-evaluation and the loss of upward comparison) and others-centered factors (the enthusiasm of presenting content, elaborate strategy, proximity of social distance and Content's Relevance to me) are the main causes of youth anxiety. This study is of great significance to explore the relationship between the communication of social media and individual mental health.

**Keywords:** Wechat moments · Self-presentation · Anxiety · Social comparison

## 1 Introduction

Anxiety has become a common social psychology. In terms of platforms, Wechat is the only platform where the positive impact of social media has decreased. With the generalization of online "friends", the social network on Wechat not only includes intimate relationships, but also includes more casual acquaintances or even strangers [1], which also provides richer opportunities for "comparison". Reports and related studies about the use of social media causing or aggravating individual anxiety symptoms have aroused widespread concern in the society. But back to reality, there are still many questions about the influence process and mechanism of self-presentation in Wechat moments on anxiety.

The following questions are put forward in this paper:

Q1: What are the influencing factors of self-presentation in Wechat moments on youth anxiety?

Q2: Is this anxiety related to young people's social comparison behavior on Wechat moments?

Through the retrieval and combing of relevant literature, Researchers mainly examine the relationship between the use of social platforms and anxiety from the aspects of frequency, duration, motivation and anxiety, researchers mainly study from platforms

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represented by weak connection such as Facebook and Weibo. However, there is relatively little research on the relationship between self-presentation and anxiety on social platforms. Researchers mainly investigate the relationship based on Goffman's hypothesis theory. Therefore, this study mainly takes Wechat moments as the research platform and explores the influencing factors of self-presentation on social platforms on anxiety through grounded theory and social comparison theory.

## **2 Research Methods and Design**

### **2.1 Research Method**

This study mainly adopts grounded theory, and uses systematic procedures to develop and inductively guide the grounded theory. The interviews were mainly conducted in the form of online meetings, and the whole process was recorded. The qualitative analysis software Nvivo11.0 was used to analyze the collected original interview data.

### **2.2 Sample Selection**

We purposefully sampling 15 young men through a "Theoretical sampling principle" that allows them to perceive anxiety in their Wechat moments. The youngest respondent is 19, the oldest is 31. The interviewees' education background covers junior college students, undergraduate students, master students and doctoral students. The occupations of interviewees were as mutually exclusive as possible, including students, public officials, corporate workers, self-employed and freelancers. According to the "theoretical saturation principle" of sample size, 12 interviewees were first interviewed one-on-one. In the stage of theoretical saturation test, the reserved 3 interviewees were interviewed (Table 1).

## **3 Data Analysis**

### **3.1 Opening Coding**

Eight categories are summarized. The following table extracts representative source discourse corresponding to each category (see Table 2).

### **3.2 Axial Coding**

Axial coding is to discover the relationship between different genera [2]. On the basis of Opening coding, through the further analysis of 8 categories extracted from open coding, three main categories are concluded (see Table 3 and Table 4).

**Table 1.** Sample characteristics(N = 15)

Number	Sex	Age	Occupation	Education	Major
F-1-LXZ	Male	19	students	junior college	Sports
F-2-MMY	Female	21	students	junior College	Costume show
F-3-DST	Female	22	Company staff	Junior College	Arts
M-1-ZYY	Female	24	Company Staff	Undergraduate	Management
M-2-QWJ	Female	25	Public Servant	Undergraduate	Journalism
M-3-WXZ	Male	25	Company Staff	Undergraduate	Marketing
M-1-WZZ	Male	26	Public Servant	Undergraduate	Finance
M-4-GW	Male	27	Self-employed	Undergraduate	E-commerce
M-3-ZS	Female	29	Freelance	Undergraduate	Administration
N-1-LZL	Male	25	Student	Master	Arts
N-2-GY	Male	25	Company Staff	Master	Materials Science and Engineering
N-3-WHX	Female	26	Company Staff	Master	Journalism
N-4-GJY	Female	27	Public Servant	Master	Communication
N-1-XG	Male	25	Student	PhD	Optoelectronic Engineering
N-2-FL	Male	31	Public servant	PhD	Calligraphy

### 3.3 Selective Coding and Model Construction

The relationship between self-presentation of Wechat moments and youth's anxiety is further discussed around the four themes obtained by Axial coding. The key words of the core category are enough to explain the connotation of the whole study, and it is easy to have relations with other categories and develop into a generalized theory [3].The analysis adopts the relationship structure of “one-way influence” or “two-way influence”. See the table below for examples.

Through combing the relationships between the categories, it is determined that the core category of this study is “the factors that affect the anxiety of young people by self-presentation in Wechat moments”, which are mainly composed of individual-centered factors (the failure of self-satisfaction, the fear of self-evaluation and the loss of upward comparison) and others-centered factors (the enthusiasm of presenting content, the strategy of carefully publishing, the proximity of social distance and the relevance between content and me). The interaction between them has jointly triggered the anxiety of young people in the self-presentation on Wechat moments(see Fig. 1).

### 3.4 Theoretical Saturation Detection

In order to test the reliability and sufficiency of material concept, main category and core category, saturation test is needed [9].A total of 15 young people were interviewed. First,

**Table 2.** Examples of Opening coding

Data source	representative statement	conceptualization	categorization
M-2-QWJ	I will concern about 'likes' and doubt myself if the feedback is not good.	a2 poor feedback	A1 the failure of self-satisfaction
F-3-DST	"I felt embarrassed when no one read it.so now I don't post on moments"	a4 feels embarrassed	A2 the worry about self-evaluation
N-3-WHX	"My Wechat moments is full of selfies. I feel inferior when compared to people who are prettier than me."	a13 looks better than me	A3 The loss of upward comparison
M-1-ZYY	"Everyone in the moments are so exquisite, I really envy them."	a24 Forward publishing	A4 enthusiasm to present content
M-2-QWJ	"I think over the words and phrases, carefully select the photos before Posting."	a34 mulls over	A5 elaborate strategy
M-1-ZYY	"I feel that others are living a good life compared to me. "	a39 Compare the people around you	A6 Proximity to social distance
M-3-WXZ	"I see more nameless anxiety up for fear that all kinds of urge marriage."	a42 related to my personal life	A7 Content's Relevance to Me
N-1-XG	"I worry about being left behind after I saw a classmate's paper is published on Wechat moments. "	a44 Worry	A8 negative perception
F-2-MMY	"I clicked on the moments of my classmate, she got full marks in several courses. I can not help scolding I am a waste."	a45 Waste	

12 interviewees were selected for data collection. Through the basic classification, coding and analysis of their original interview data, a preliminary conclusion was formed. Then, the remaining 3 young people were interviewed and the original data were analyzed, and no new concepts, categories and relationships were found, which showed that the model has reached theoretical saturation.

**Table 3.** Examples of Axial coding

Main category	Sub-category	Category connotation
B1 Individual central factor	A1 the failure of self-satisfaction	I didn't get the desired feedback after Posting on Wechat moments.
	A2 the Worry about self-evaluation	I am worried that I am not popular when I don't get the expected feedback.
	A3 the loss of Upward comparison	Feel lost when comparing with people who are better than themselves in certain aspects.
B2 Others-centered factor	A4 The enthusiasm of presenting content	Show positive life status and content in the moments.
	A5 elaborate strategy	Carefully design the content before sending friends.
	A6 Proximity to Social Distance	In real life, I am very close to my social life.
	A7 Content's Relevance to Me	The content of the published moments is related to my own lives.
B3 Anxiety	A8 negative perception	Anxiety, loss and other emotions appear.

**Table 4.** Examples of Selective Coding

Inter-topic relationship	Relational structure	Connotation of relationship structure
Personal-centered factors → anxiety	One-way	The failure of self-satisfaction, the worry of self-evaluation and the loss of upward comparison in personal-centered factors make young people feel anxious in self-presentation.
Others-centered factors → anxiety	One-way	The enthusiasm of presenting content, the strategy of carefully publishing, the proximity of social distance and the correlation between content and me, will induce the comparison between young people and their friends, thus generating negative emotions.
Others-centered factor, personal-centered factor	Two-way	others' enthusiasm for presenting content, elaborate strategy and proximity of social distance will induce the loss of young people's upward comparison, aggravate the failure of self-satisfaction; the young will take the initiative to present content and influence the "audience" through the proximity of social distance and the relevance of the presented content.

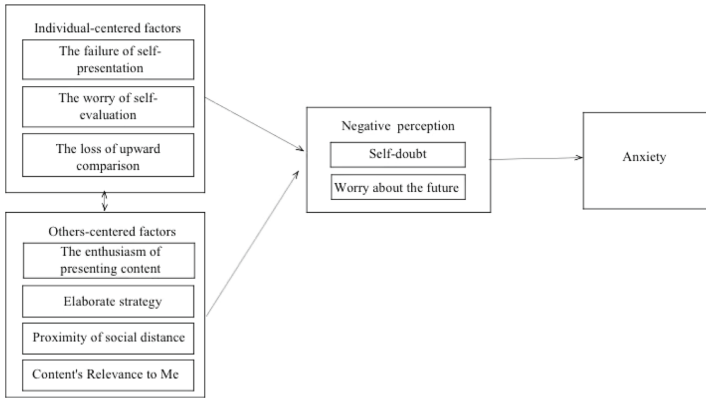


Fig. 1. Theoretical model

### 4 Research Conclusions

First of all, China has a unique “face” culture, that is, he is very concerned about what others think of him [4]. Young people’s self-presentation on Wechat moments is often accompanied by comparative motivation of self-satisfaction. When forming impression motivation, people will have the desire to establish a good image in their minds, so they will have the motivation to control how others view themselves [10]. When they turn their moments into a stage for self-presentation or an emotional outlet eager for recognition, once the output can’t get positive feedback, anxiety will arise. Young people also imply the motivation of self-evaluation on Wechat moments. Social comparison provides an important source for self-evaluation and self-knowledge. When the feedback fails to meet expectations, young individuals will have a tendency of “self-doubt”. Motivated by self-improvement, most young people adopt upward comparison to motivate themselves. Social comparison with strong relationships may be a double-edged sword [5]. LockWood and Kunda found that when individuals feel that they can’t achieve the goal of upward comparison with their best efforts, upward comparison will make people feel frustrated [6].

Secondly, the others-centered factors in the self-presentation on Wechat moments affect the youth’s anxiety. For the needs of impression management, the young usually adopt positive self-presentation methods and elaborate presentation strategies, and carefully designing the time and graphic way of content presentation. Due to social needs such as impression management, the young will regularly show their favorite side when presenting themselves to avoid the collapse of the scene when they meet unknown visitors [7]. However, the real state of others’ real life cannot be fully understood by young individuals, which may lead to envy and inferiority. On the other hand, because most of the young people’s contacts on Wechat moments are peer groups, it will form a strong contrast, then aggravate the anxiety of young individuals.

Finally, Individual-centered factors and others-centered factors interact with each other. The enthusiasm of presenting content, the strategy of careful publishing, the proximity of social distance and the correlation between content and me will affect the

self-cognition of young individuals, thus affecting their comparative motivation and comparative object. At the same time, young individuals are “performers” on Wechat moments, in order to avoid the failure of self-satisfaction, the worry of self-evaluation and the loss of upward comparison, some young people will try their best to adopt positive presentation methods and elaborate presentation strategies on Wechat moments, and influence “audience” through the proximity of social distance and the relevance of content to others.

It is found that youth’s self-presentation on social platforms is not only an act of showing and emphasizing, but also implies social comparison. In some cases, depression, anxiety and stress, these symptoms are not isolated, but coexist [8]. For young people, we should establish a sense of identity with myself. When you feel inferior to others, choose a new comparison object or dimension. At the same time, you can focus more on the “concrete” relationship around you, rather than the relationship that exists in the “list” of Wechat moments.

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