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A Study on the Phenomenon of "WeChat Sign-Up Chain" in Parents' WeChat Groups from the Perspective of Group Pressure

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Abstract: Parent WeChat groups, established and organized based on technological advancements, serve as crucial platforms for home-school communication. However, various phenomena arising from group pressure within these groups occasionally occur. Through observing participation in parent WeChat groups and conducting in-depth interviews with some parents, the author explores behaviors such as activity, following, and silence exhibited by parents in the "WeChat sign-up chain" phenomenon from the perspective of group pressure. The author analyzes issues arising in parent groups and proposes corresponding strategies.

Keywords: Group Pressure; Parents' WeChat Group; "WeChat Sign-up Chain"; Spiral of Silence

1.Introduction

In the era of social media, due to the timeliness, convenience and universality of WeChat, WeChat parent group has become an important bridge for home school communication. Teachers release news, notices and reminders in the group, and parents give feedback and communicate with each other.[1]However, this way of home school communication has also brought many problems, such as the various teaching tasks assigned by teachers to parents, the "fancy" flattery of parents to teachers, the comparison and attack between parents, and so on. This paper will take the phenomenon of parents' connecting in WeChat group as the breakthrough point to explore the causes, problems and coping strategies.

Guo Qingguang, a Chinese communication scholar, defined group pressure as a kind of pressure generated by the majority opinion of a group on the minority opinion of its members. Under the influence of group pressure, individuals' thoughts and behaviors will change to a large extent, which is manifested in the compromise and concession to the opinions of group advantages.[2]The experiment of Solomon Ashe, an American psychologist, on group pressure in small groups also proves that people will have information pressure and convergence psychology in groups. What is reflected in parents' WeChat group is the phenomenon of "Solitaire" on screen. In order to maintain a good relationship with educators, most parents in the group will express positive support, which will weaken the heterogeneity and personality of members and gradually tend to be assimilated.[3]

In the process of "WeChat sign-up chain", parents as activists actively spoke or made dominant opinions in the group, some parents as followers echoed the opinions or opinions, and some parents turned silent for various reasons. Parents'

WeChat group weakens the function of communication and turns into a dragonfly screen group. It seems to have unified and harmonious opinions, but it actually hides various contradictions and problems.

2.Group member characteristics

Through the observation of parents' WeChat groups at three different levels of Education (primary school, junior high school and senior high school), the author selected the WeChat group chat messages from May 21 to May 27 in 2025 for sorting and analysis, and summarized the activity of parents' WeChat group members, i.e. the frequency of information release and the proportion, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Basic distribution of parents' WeChat group members

	Primary school group	Junior high school group	Senior high school group
Average daily active reply/message sending ≥ 5 (person)	10	7	6
Proportion of people (%)	25%	13.46%	11.11%
Average number of messages released per day (piece)	7	5	5
Proportion of daily average distributed messages (%)	77.78%	50.00%	71.43%
Average daily active reply/send messages ≤ 5 (person)	5	10	4
Proportion of people (%)	12.50%	19.23%	7.41%
Average number of messages released per day (piece)	2	5	2
Proportion of daily average distributed messages (%)	22.22%	50.00%	28.57%
No reply/send message(person)	25	35	44
Proportion of people (%)	62.50%	67.31%	81.48%
Total daily average messages	9	10	7
Total number	40	52	54

Through the comparison of the above data, it can be found that the proportion of active people who actively reply and send 5 or more messages per day is not high in the parents' WeChat group, but the number of news releases accounts for the largest proportion of the total number of daily average messages; Silent people account for the highest proportion in the parents' WeChat group, but they remain silent and rarely respond or send messages in the parents' WeChat group.

In depth interviews were conducted with 15 parents with different levels of activity from the above three parent groups to supplement the information that could not be obtained from the daily information release.

2.1 Activists

The activists are usually members of the family committee, who have high cultural level, good organizational ability and good professional reputation. Their identity and expression intensity make them gradually play the opinion leaders of parents' WeChat group. Activists actively reply and send group messages in parents' WeChat group, especially when the teacher issues a notice or message, activists will respond quickly. Teachers will also manage the entire parents' WeChat group by organizing activists to join the family committee. Some information will be disseminated in accordance with the two-level communication mode of "Teacher - Family Committee - All parents"."Although it is good for the teacher to discuss with the family committee, there are a few sycophants in the family committee who say everything is good, and then they send it together again, which is not something we ordinary parents can change."(Interviewee No.1)After activists become opinion leaders, because they have more contact with teachers than ordinary parents, and have released most WeChat group messages, it is easy to form a "opinion climate" that affects and restricts the thoughts and behaviors of other ordinary parents.

2.2 Followers

Followers are usually ordinary parents of WeChat groups. Compared with active followers, followers are in a subordinate position. They do not actively create or participate in topics, and they will not get more attention if they occasionally express opinions. They will echo and follow after the active person releases information or the active person replies to the teacher's information. Interviewee No.2 said that following was also his own helpless move,"Because everyone is connecting. If I don't answer and follow them back to the news, I think it will give the teacher a look that I, the parent, don't care about your children at all, and he won't care about your children either."The convergence psychology makes parents hope to be consistent with the majority opinions shown in the group, so as to prevent themselves and their children from being punished by the group because of isolation. Interviewee No.3 believed that the following behavior in the WeChat group was not a worry about "not connecting", but just in line with the norms of the group, giving a receptive answer to the news, or affirming the work of teachers.

2.3 Silents

Silent people are the majority of parents' WeChat groups. When responding to messages unnecessarily, parents are mostly silent and keep the collective silence belonging to the majority. Most of the time, silent people are also bystanders. They will accept the news of parents' WeChat group in a focused or comprehensive way, and will not miss it, but will not make a voice."We are a group of people who are arranged. What the family committee and the teacher have said is done after seeing it. There is no need to talk about it. The backstage can see whether you have done it or not. Why sing praises to yourself like singing?"(Interviewee No.4)However, in addition to the respondent's silence because he believed that "WeChat sign-up chain" was meaningless behavior, the silence of respondent No. 5 was more due to group pressure,"In fact, sometimes I disagree with those who punch in the clock, receive messages from teachers after others, and participate in discussions. Sometimes I even think that I am very opposed to certain activities and behaviors, but I can't help it. If I follow too many people, I will be hostile and may be ostracized by children. I can't help but obey the majority."When the majority opinion in the group is overwhelming, the parents who hold the minority opinion will choose to turn or remain silent.

3."WeChat sign-up chain" under group pressure

Group is the inseparable space of life. Within a certain range, group pressure can restrain and influence the members of the group. Teachers and parents use group pressure to manage, so that the behavior of group members can meet the group norms and group consciousness. However, under group pressure, parents will have information pressure because of most of the information, and have convergence psychology because of fear of being isolated, and the phenomenon of "spiral of silence" exists significantly in parents' WeChat group.

3.1 Information pressure

The group provides a reference for individual behavior. In general, people tend to believe the information provided by the majority, whose correct probability is greater than that of the minority, and trust the majority opinion. Information pressure from the group exerts invisible pressure on individuals, providing group information and reference for individual behavior. People who receive relevant information are more likely to accept it from the heart, so as to be consistent with the actions and beliefs of the group."When the family committee organizes the purchase of after-school counseling books, it may be that some people first buy them, then they share the list in the group, share how good the book is, and their children have been improved, and then release the news: the people who want to buy it are connected. In fact, when you think about it carefully, you follow the trend blindly, but you think it is useful. That should be useful."(Interviewee No.6)In order to carry out effective home school communication and cooperation, under the influence of information pressure, parents will make a certain degree of compromise and concession, sometimes they will also carry out group blind obedience.[4]

3.2 Herd mentality

Integration into a group is a way for individuals to survive in society. When individuals are excluded from a group, they usually have certain negative emotions, such as pain, anxiety, doubt and so on. When the individual behavior in the group deviates from the group norms, it will face huge group pressure. The individual's dependence on the group is accompanied by the fear of being isolated, so the individual chooses to be consistent with the group to eliminate the sense of insecurity

caused by inconsistency.[5]"When a teacher sends a message or issues a task in the group, others reply 'yes, the teacher has worked hard!'. If I don't reply, the teacher will feel as if I'm the only one who doesn't care about his efforts, or I'm the only one who doesn't provide this emotional value. I may also be isolated and encounter various obstacles in the parent group. My child may be bullied at school because I haven't done a good job as a parent."(Interviewee No.7)Under the influence of herd mentality, some parents will truly change their inner views and behavior patterns to align with the parent group. A small number of parents, although their inner thoughts have not changed, have chosen to align with the group due to group pressure and considering their own low influence on discourse.

3.3 The Spiral of Silence

The phenomenon of "spiral of silence" also exists in parent WeChat groups. Parents observe the opinion environment within the group before expressing their opinions. When they find themselves on the side of "minority" or "disadvantaged" opinions, they will turn to agreement or silence.[6]"The teacher solicited opinions in the group chat, and those who agreed responded immediately. Actually, I didn't agree with that matter at that time, but you saw that the team was getting longer and there were so many people who agreed, and it didn't feel useful to disagree. It would also delay the children in the opposite direction, so I didn't say anything."(Interviewee No.8)Similarly, the managers of parent WeChat groups also create an "opinion environment" by unifying the speaking direction of active members in the parent WeChat group, setting predetermined goals as "advantageous" opinions, and presenting them in the form of "sending follow-up messages", thereby making the minority turn silent and adjusting their behavior to meet the group's requirements.[7]

4.Problems

The phenomenon of "WeChat sign-up chain" in parent WeChat groups reflects the impact of group pressure on parents' personal behavior, and at the same time, it also brings problems to communication between home and school, which cannot be ignored. Under group pressure, there is a "one-man rule", flattery towards educators during the group joining process, and the expansion of knowledge gap brought about by WeChat group activities, which also leads to misunderstandings and obstacles in home school cooperation.

4.1 "Deciding everything by one man's say"

French social psychologist Gustave Le Pen wrote in "The Crowd": "The masses are always willing to listen to strong willed people, and he knows how to force them to accept his own opinions.[8]The opinion leaders in the parent WeChat group are mostly teachers or active parents. In traditional beliefs, teachers play the role of imparting professional knowledge and answering questions, and are professionals in the field with rich educational experience. At the same time, teachers also have access to some information and students' dynamics in school, which strengthens their authority.[9]In the process of information dissemination in parent WeChat groups, teachers act as opinion leaders while parents act as passive audiences, lacking equal communication and exchange, and can only accept or even flock to teachers' information."What the teacher said definitely makes sense. They have taught so many students, so they should have more experience than us parents. Of course, no one can oppose the teacher. Your child is studying under their guidance."(Interviewee No.9)

Cultivating members of the family committee, forming an opinion environment through their unanimous speeches, and utilizing group pressure are common ways for parents to manage WeChat groups."The teacher is afraid of being opposed, so he asked the members of the family committee to come up with a plan to pass on the message. They all said the same thing, which gives people a sense of oppression. If you don't agree, you have to agree. Whoever gives you a stumbling block will cause your child to lose something."(Interviewee No.10)Members of the family committee have become the "airfone" for teachers, ignoring normal communication and interaction, causing great difficulties for the healthy flow of family school education.

4.2 Flattery and comparison

In order to maintain a good relationship with the teacher, after the teacher posted the message, parents sent replies such as "Thank you teacher" and "Teacher, thank you for your hard work" in the WeChat group, which filled up their phone screens. Some parents also added text expressions during the relay reply process to express their gratitude, fearing that the word count would be less than other parents. No matter what the teacher says, the parents always praise them, and the dialogue between

the teacher and parents presents a meaningless flattery like agreement.[10] Interviewee No.11 expressed opposition to this type of "prop style" succession,"Sometimes I really feel that it's not necessary to praise teachers. It's not that teachers are not worthy of praise, but sometimes it's just a notification or a message. Do we need to praise teachers so much? Teachers also feel that it's fake, and we know it's fake politeness. Some teachers really enjoy this model, and I really feel that children are being taught bad by both parents and teachers."Parents only respond and agree with educators from a catering perspective, without independent thinking and judgment, presenting a reactive and task oriented identification without engaging in educational dialogue.

There are also comparisons among members of the parent group in the "WeChat sign-up chain" program. The interviewee NO.12 said that when completing the check-in task in the WeChat group, the comparison and competition among parents are also fierce,"For example, if the task in the group is to post a singing video, it could have been just a simple shot of a child singing. Gradually, some parents start showing off their children's ability to play musical instruments, while others ask their children to dance and sing at the same time. Moreover, there are not only those who compare themselves to other children, but also those who seem to be completing the task, but actually show off their family background, which really creates a bad atmosphere."Parents will understand and evaluate themselves and their children through comparison, sometimes unconsciously and sometimes consciously. The comparison within the group is also carefully designed by parents. With the increasing frequency of such comparisons, parents find it difficult to face them calmly. Some may fall into anxiety and inferiority, while others may cause stress for their children.

4.3 Knowledge Gap iteration

Due to differences in education level, media exposure and utilization, ability to accept new things, and sufficient time and energy among members of the parent WeChat group, the gap between parents who are proficient in using or have ample time to use WeChat for home school information exchange and those who are not proficient continues to widen.[11]"I may have grown up older than other families. At first, I didn't know how to vote, reply to messages, or clock in through the mini program sent by the teacher on WeChat. This also delayed my child's affairs. I was even called by the teacher for submitting late, so I had to ask for help with this thing everywhere."(Interviewee No.13)The knowledge gap between parents will iterate, directly affecting the differences between children and expanding them. In addition to media exposure skills, many parents are also unable to respond to messages in their WeChat groups in a timely manner due to work reasons,Interviewee No.14 said,"We also work to support this family. We are busy with work every day and don't have so much time to reply to messages from parent groups. If we are late, we will be criticized by name, and even the teacher will call us to the office for a conversation. We are also under a lot of pressure."Both interviewees mentioned that due to delayed pick-up, they missed several notifications of class organization activities, and as a result, their children did not have equal opportunities like others.

5.Introspection

Although there are various problems in the parents' WeChat group under the group pressure, it is undeniable that the proper use of group pressure to manage the parents' WeChat group can increase the cohesion of the class to a certain extent, establish the consistent educational objectives of the family and school, and form a common sense of responsibility and honor.[12]This study also explores the negative problems of WeChat parent group under group pressure, and hopes that parents' WeChat group can play a positive role in promoting home school cooperation.

5.1 Maintain diversity

In the parent group, teachers and active members of the family committee should actively publish topics, organize orderly group discussions, and guide most parents to freely express their opinions. Avoid "one size fits all" in the discussion of various affairs in the class, create an open and transparent democratic atmosphere for home school communication, and reduce the pressure unilaterally imposed by the school. The discussion of collective issues in parents' WeChat group can not only make parents feel more involved, but also promote the establishment of a harmonious atmosphere in the class and find consistent opinions in diversity.

5.2 Establish a good atmosphere

The phenomenon of flattery is a kind of social psychological reaction. Because the dominant power of education is in the

hands of teachers, the relationship between teachers and parents is not equal. Some parents flatter in order to cater to teachers, which leads to the establishment of the parent group deviates from the original intention.[13]Teachers and parents should create a common atmosphere in the WeChat group, improve their personal quality, and change from one-way output to equal cooperation. Teachers can properly conduct correct guidance and put an end to meaningless "flattery". Members of the parent group need to supervise each other, strengthen communication, and have a deep understanding of the bad social atmosphere and negative impact on children caused by abnormal comparison.[14]

5.3 Narrow the gap of "Knowledge Gap"

It is a reflection of the unclear division of educational rights and responsibilities that the school leaves everything to parents or that parents are forced or actively involved in excessive participation. Parents should coordinate the downward dissemination of home school education concepts, as well as the upward dissemination of feedback on educational problems and suggestions, so as to reduce the meaningless replies that parents spend time and energy in the group. The essence of parents' WeChat group is a tool for home school communication. Considering the differences in media information literacy and technology application level of parents' group members, schools should provide some technical guidance to reduce the "knowledge gap" differences between parents and students brought by parents.[15]

Parents' WeChat group provides a new form and platform for home school communication, but the differences between online and offline and the problems they bring can not be ignored. In the new media technology environment, it is necessary to give full play to the advantages of parents' WeChat group, grasp the propagation law and give correct guidance, realize deeper home school communication and cooperation, form a joint force of education, and jointly help the healthy growth of children.

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