

# A study on emotional crisis, emotional compensation and relationship evolution in "Partner" social interaction

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**Abstract.** Recently, the "partner social", which focuses on the accurate companionship in the vertical segmentation field, has swept the network and become a new expression of young people's emotional needs. In the absence of real emotional basis, the "partner" relationship formed with strangers or semi-acquaintances through the network platform is extremely fragile, which may cause emotional crisis such as emotional fracture and emotional deception in the social process. However, this "weak connection" can properly meet the different psychological needs of young people, and help them to obtain emotional compensation in the aspects of emotional companionship, emotional support, and emotional adjustment in interpersonal communication. The "partner" relationship with the attribute of tools may be broken and scattered, but it represents the first step for people to regain the "nearby" and develop friendship, and this new attempt may become the beginning of people's deep relationship in the trend of escalating interest, and plays an indispensable emotional function in people's social life.

**Keywords:** Partner socializing; Emotional relationship; Emotional compensation.

## 1. Introduction

In the current young people, there is a popular "culture", Such as fish partners at work, dinner partners, drinking milk tea partners, travel partners, photo partners, school self-study partners... "Partner" socializing has become a new expression of emotional need among more and more people. In contrast to the strong bonds of family members and close friends, psychologists and sociologists refer to these relationships as "weak ties" or "marginal ties."<sup>[1]</sup> Some scholars have pointed out that this weak link shallow social "partner" model may have multiple hidden dangers that affect the establishment of intimate relationship, affect information acquisition and cognition, and lead to the conflict of social normative values.<sup>[2]</sup> Some scholars also believe that "partner" social has the instrumental attribute of "egoism", which is a light social without burden, and at the same time, it can obtain certain emotional compensation and achieve certain purposes.<sup>[3]</sup>

By combing the relevant literature, it can be found that up to now, the academic research on "partner social" mainly focuses on the phenomenon of youth subculture, such as the analysis of the connotation, characteristics, formation logic,<sup>[4]</sup> internal hidden dangers and countermeasures of "partner social",<sup>[2]</sup> little attention has been paid to people's internal emotional turn and psychological experience in "partner social" light social. As a new type of social culture, "partner" social reflects the changes of social mentality and communication needs of the new generation. Which got us thinking, does the depth of the partnership matter? Can partnering really heal young people? What are the emotional risks of this new vertical social relationship? And what kind of emotional compensation? What's the end of the partnership? Could it escalate into a lasting friendship?

## 2. Problems and Symptoms: Emotional crisis in "partner" socializing

Media technology has reshaped people's emotional experience and changed the ways and rules of people's emotional expression. As digital natives, young people are more adept at using digital network technology to carry out online communication, while "partner type" socializing takes digital platforms as connection intermediaries, extending the fast food and low-cost online friendship to the offline flowing public space, and building a new model of online digital

communication and sticky interaction with reality. However, unlike traditional social relationships based on geography and kinship, "partner" socializing is more of a temporary intimate relationship with strangers based on a certain situation. In the absence of a real emotional foundation, this temporary "partnership" is inherently fragile.

### **2.1 Emotional fracture: fast food style light social**

"Similar tastes, easy to get along with" is the primary criterion for young people to find a partner. This low-threshold, temporary new social way combines individuation and socialization (combining interests with social interaction), private nature and public nature (private space, at the same time relying on a public platform) [5] The fusion of multiple attributes makes it constitute an aggregation form of relationship mode - fast food light social.

The "partner" maintains the sense of blurred boundaries between people in a non-intrusive way, and the relationship is extremely relaxed, controlled, and stress-free. At the same time, it also means that in the process of social interaction, both parties do not have to carry out too much emotional pay, in-depth emotional communication, and do not need to bear responsibility for each other. In "partner social", low emotional investment between each other often leads to low-quality social interaction, even if the match is accurate, it may not meet expectations. [4] For young people, long-term addiction to "partner" social, may lead to their own social alienation, and then affect the deep emotional construction. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the correct guidance of young people's "partner type" social interaction, enhance the scientific cognitive ability of the subject, and establish a reasonable and effective social mode. [2]

### **2.2 Emotional deception: low-cost pseudo-social**

Due to the low cost and convenience of "partner" and the network anonymity of the way to make friends, "partner object" is mostly composed of strangers who do not know or know little about it, so "partner" also implies certain risks. For example, in the "RedAPP ", there is a phenomenon of emotional deception in the name of "looking for a chat partner", and then ask for private information from the other party and further carry out fund fraud. This social interaction involving strangers or semi-acquaintances is highly likely to be used by criminals, bringing various security risks, such as privacy disclosure, emotional fraud, property loss and even life danger. [2]

Therefore, young people should maintain a certain degree of vigilance and personal rational thinking. On the one hand, learn to distinguish the truth of information, do not easily believe the words or promises of strangers on the other end of the screen, especially need to improve their own sensitivity to strangers in closing the distance. On the other hand, it is necessary to correctly understand the privacy protection issues in "partner" social communication, avoid the theft or tampering of personal information, improve personal prevention ability, enhance self-protection awareness, and avoid irreparable serious consequences.

## **3. turnaround and hope: emotional compensation in the "partner" relationship**

The frequent movement of population and the heterogeneity of modern life rhythm not only face the spatial distance between once familiar friends, but also make the deep friendship formed based on long-term social interaction gradually fade, resulting in the reduction of common language. In addition, young people in modern society pay more and more attention to the awareness of privacy and boundary. At this time, "partner" social with its unique sense of boundary and sense of proportion to stand out. In the view of scholar Dong Chenyu, compared with nodding friends, relatives and friends, the meaning of "partner" has a very subtle sense of proportion. [3]

### **3.1 Emotional companionship: break through the loneliness of the soul comfort**

In her book Group Loneliness, Sydney Turkle argues that while digital media technology is convenient for the masses, it also makes them trapped in endless "loneliness." [6] Scholar Tu Lingbo

pointed out that new media technology has eliminated an important practice of individual life -- solitude. With the development of technology and the evolution of The Times, the types of "partners" are becoming more and more diverse, and are no longer only played by a single human, and new technologies have also joined them and created new worlds.

From Haidilao's "dining partner" companion doll "Xiaohi" to the intelligent robot "chat partner" ChatGPT that can chat online, "partners" not only help people break out of loneliness, but also meet many niche needs. These cases of sharing through different technologies also together constitute the scholar Penlan believes that "man-machine coexistence of social forms and life." It is the emotional companionship of "partners" that allows each "information island" to gain social connection with the big world again, so as to experience the vitality and motivation of individual life. Long-term, temporary, realistic, and cybernetic "Tech partners" awaken and help people fight loneliness, catch up with the accelerating pace of social life, and thus lead people to adapt to a new era of ever-changing atomization. This is also the infinite derivation and new development of "partners" in the Internet era.

### **3.2 Weak connection compensation: the emotional support shared by the interest margin**

In his book "A Brief History of Social Media", Tom Standic believes that social sharing is human nature, <sup>[7]</sup> whether it is a "dining partner" or a "chatting partner", the essential point is "companionship and sharing". In 2023, the "2023 Partner Social Report" jointly released by DT Finance and DT Research Institute shows that in the voting initiated by it, the number of people who believe that a good "partner" should have similar tastes to their own accounted for 83.3% of the total number of participants in the survey, which fully shows that contemporary young people tend to find suitable circles and peers. To build social relationships that are more in line with desired expectations.

Scholar Peng Lan pointed out that the social relations in the current network communication belong to a "circle communication". Everyone is a node in a social network. People share information naturally in different circles and networks. Rather than strong connections based on intimacy and kinship, young people who pursue both practical and emotional relationships want to socialize in a burdenless way. However, weak connection can quickly complete emotional compensation under the premise of pragmatism. "Partner" not only simplifies social relations but also improves interpersonal relations. Contemporary youth participate in different "interest groups" according to their different interests, and terminate or rebuild their "interest relationship" as their interests change, enjoying their "interest life" in the mode of "participation - exit - new participation" with a high degree of freedom.

### **3.3 Emotional adjustment: self-exploration of two-way redemption**

In his book *The Disappearance of the Other*, Han Bingzhe believes that the "other" in today's society is disappearing. <sup>[8]</sup> The emergence of all kinds of "partners" is the resistance to the disappearance of others. "Partners" not only undertake the functions of accompanying people to eat, drink, play and fitness, but also provide other people's thinking and objective views, so that people are no longer limited to getting the cognition of others by skipping themselves, but directly get timely feedback and correction through different "partners". According to a survey report on new ways of socializing among young people published by China Youth Daily, 68.9 percent of the young people surveyed believe that "partner" socializing is a brave step to step out of their social comfort zone and seek a new social mode. <sup>[9]</sup> Some interviewees mentioned that "partner networking is also a disguised way of self-exploration."

Some scholars have found in the analysis of the narrative strategies of variety shows of love social observation that multiple observation can make the communication between people "smooth". For example, the star guests in the "second scene" (studio) have the identities of both "observer" and "observed", and they observe the ordinary guests in the "first scene" as observers. The audience in front of the screen can see both the love story of the "first scene" and the views of different

observers in the "second scene", which not only broadens the audience's observation scope, but also triggers people's multi-angle thinking. In this view, contemporary youth not only form "partners" in reality, but also watch others form "partners" (Pairing) in variety shows, objectizing visual perception through the comparative experience of people and themselves, and examining themselves as objects, finding the "self-consistent" position of individuals in the social structure through multiple observations and self-dialogue.

#### **4. Limitations and opportunities: the evolution of partner social relationships**

Xiang Biao, an anthropologist, believes that utilitarianism is one of the causes of defamiliarization. Once people anticipate non-utilitarian, important life emotions, they are in a certain uncertainty. So after self-shielding, simplifying, and ossifying relationships, the world becomes simpler and more manageable.<sup>[1]</sup> This kind of partnership based on some regular purpose and behavior contains instrumental attributes, but does "partner" socializing really stop at instrumental interpersonal relations?

##### **4.1 Disconnection and departure**

American sociologist Granovetter believes that "weak ties" not only have a strong diffusion effect on information dissemination, but also may act as a bridge across social boundaries and provide more possibilities for interpersonal communication. The "partner" formed based on the "weak connection" relationship attribute of the network breaks away from the sticky relationship between people in the traditional social interaction, and can bring people phased emotional compensation and substitute satisfaction in emotional value.

However, if the regulation of ethics and morality is ignored, the "partners" will hold a negative attitude towards the temporary emotional relationship, which will make the communication between people be controlled by the power of alienation, resulting in the fluidity, instability and abnormal vulnerability of social relations. Due to the lack of real emotional basis, when leaving a certain need or a specific situation, the "partner" relationship may be gradually forgotten. Therefore, after completing the subdivision matters needed by each other, they returned to the track of life without disturbing each other again, and tacitly ended this temporary friendship.

##### **4.2 Connection and search**

In *The Metropolis and Spiritual Life*, the German philosopher Simmel predicted the mass social psychology of the current highly rationalized society: people's lifestyles are increasingly like independent atoms, clustered in a certain core, but alienated and indifferent to the people outside the group.

With the development of society, the tentacles of the Internet continue to extend to the end, you can move your finger at the end of the mobile phone takeout, sitting at home on the Internet can know the world events, people no longer need to ask about the people around them every day as the original, "the result is that the individual is more and more 'atomization', more attention to self and 'distance', I gradually lost sight of the 500 meters around me."<sup>[3]</sup> In the process of modernity, "the disappearance of the neighborhood" has become a typical feature of modern social structure, which makes individuals more likely to fall into a state of loneliness, alienation and helplessness. Looking for a partner can actually be seen as the first step for young people to get out of the "room" and regain the "neighborhood", and it is a useful attempt to develop friendship, find intimacy and sense of belonging.

##### **4.3 Upgrading and conversion**

As a new form of social interaction, the existence of "partner" relationship actually goes hand in hand with intimate relationship, they each assume different functions, but in essence, they achieve the same goal, that is, to make people's lives more consistent. Common interests can break the

original cognitive structure and enhance mutual understanding; Frequent communication can improve communication skills, interpersonal skills and problem solving skills. More importantly, the "partner" relationship is likely to be the beginning or opportunity for people to have a deep relationship in the trend of escalating interest.

At present, more and more partners start from accurate companionship and slowly enter each other's lives. When both people are comfortable with the relationship, the partner may also "upgrade" and "turn" into another intimate relationship, becoming a friend with deep friendship or establishing a boyfriend and girlfriend relationship. What is more, the derivative topic on the Weibo hot search list - # Ideas open: blind date by finding a "dining partner" #, which has triggered many netizens' discussions. Perhaps, starting with a "partner" gradually, it is also a good start for young people to get in touch with the world and others.

## 5. Reflection and rescue: Where is the relationship between "partners" going?

Studies have shown that "whether single or not, people need one or more partners." Instead of alienating people, the wave of singledom is creating, sustaining, and even strengthening the bonds that connect them. Millennial spouses are less likely to eat together, do housework, hang out and have mutual friends than they were 20 years ago, according to a study comparing marital status in 2000 and 1980. In her earlier research, Gillian Sundstrom identified the importance of "weak ties" and young people's mental health. <sup>[1]</sup> Other studies have shown that people who rely on multiple friends and family members for emotional support (encouragement, celebration, sympathy, etc.) are more satisfied with their lives than those who rely on only one person to provide such support, which also confirms that people need "partners" in addition to intimate partners.

Liang Yongan, a humanities scholar at Fudan University, pointed out that "partners" make cold strangers more human, giving both sides a chance to get to know each other better. "Partnership" relationships emphasize the importance of people having supportive companionship and shared experiences in an increasingly digital and isolated world, even if such relationships are not based on deep emotional bonds, but they also imply a trend that emphasizes the value of social connections and partnerships. For young people, through the network, friends and other ways to form a "partner", explore things of interest together, simply be cured by each other's accurate companionship, "partner" relationship provides a way of mutual dependence and support, make life more comfortable and beautiful, perhaps this is the meaning of finding a partner.

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