

A Comparative Study on the Legal Regulation of Harmful Information Involving Minors in Short Videos Abroad and the Path to Improving Domestic Institutions

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ABSTRACT

With the development of digital technology, short videos have become deeply integrated into the lives of minors. However, legal regulation of harmful content on these platforms faces multiple practical challenges, including low usage rates of "Youth Mode," difficulties in assigning responsibility among multiple stakeholders, and minors' strong curiosity. To effectively address these challenges, this study conducts an in-depth comparative analysis of regulatory models in the United Kingdom, the United States, the European Union, and South Korea. Drawing on the UK's content rating system, the U.S. parental supervision mechanism, the EU's risk assessment rules, and South Korea's strict criminal enforcement approach, it establishes an integrated, flexible guidance system involving families, schools, and the community to explore a legal regulatory path suited to China's national conditions.

KEYWORDS: *Short videos; international experience; protection of minors; harmful content; legal regulation.*

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INTRODUCTION

According to the 56th "Statistical Report on the Development of China's Internet" released by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), as of June 2025, the number of short-video users in China had reached 1.068 billion, accounting for 95.1% of the total internet user population. Short videos have become deeply integrated into the daily lives of the Chinese people. Among them, minors-whose mental development is not yet fully formed-are exposed to the internet and short-video platforms at an early age, resulting in a flood of information of varying quality entering their world. Because minors are still in the developmental stage, their digital literacy is relatively limited, and their ability to identify, filter, and resist harmful content is weak. As a result, they are highly susceptible to the influence of harmful information, which can even lead to criminal behavior. There are two main causes for this phenomenon: First, due to the rapid development of

digital technology, the barriers to video production have lowered, leading to a constant stream of AI-generated short videos and micro-dramas. Some creators, in an effort to grab attention and attract traffic, post videos promoting vulgar or distasteful values, which spread with alarming ease; second, short videos-through algorithm-driven personalized recommendations and features such as infinite scrolling, autoplay, and instant feedback-cause minors to spend ever-increasing amounts of time on these platforms, sometimes leading to severe addiction. In response to this situation, China has established the "principle of the best interests of minors" as its core guiding principle. At the same time, it adheres to the new-era philosophy of judicial protection for minors-characterized by "special treatment, priority, two-way engagement, and comprehensiveness"-and has introduced a series of policies to address the harm caused to minors by

harmful content on short-video platforms, with the aim of purifying the online ecosystem and strengthening the protection of minors.

Based on this, this paper will employ a comprehensive approach using multiple research methods: a literature review to examine the current domestic situation and delve into the legal regulation of harmful content involving minors on short-video platforms; comparative analysis to examine regulatory models in the United Kingdom, the United States, the European Union, and South Korea, drawing on their advanced governance experiences and methodologies; and case analysis to dissect representative cases from these countries, exploring the effectiveness of these systems and the insights they offer. Ultimately, grounded in China's national context, this paper seeks to explore a path for effectively regulating harmful information involving minors in short videos and to build a healthy and wholesome short-video environment.

THE CURRENT STATE AND PRACTICAL CHALLENGES OF LEGAL REGULATION OF HARMFUL INFORMATION INVOLVING MINORS IN CHINA'S SHORT-VIDEO INDUSTRY

A. China's Current Legal Framework for the Online Protection of Minors

1. Basic Law: Law on the Protection of Minors

When discussing China's current legal framework for the online protection of minors, we must begin with the *Law on the Protection of Minors*, the foundational law governing the protection of minors. As a cornerstone of minor protection legislation, the *Law on the Protection of Minors* was amended in 2020 to include a dedicated chapter on online protection, thereby providing a legal basis for the online protection of minors in China and opening a new chapter in this field. The 2024 amendment to the *Law on the Protection of Minors* further clarified the legislative purpose of "safeguarding the lawful rights and interests of minors and promoting their all-round development in morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, and labor." A distinctive feature of the law is that it delineates the responsibilities of different entities—from the state, society, schools, and families, to organizations of all sizes—according to their respective roles. However, most of its provisions exist as general principles, and their detailed implementation requires supplementation by subordinate legislation. The guiding legislative principle is "the best interests of the minor." This requires that subordinate legislation adhere to this golden rule when drafted.

2. Administrative Regulation: Regulations on the Protection of Minors Online

The *Law on the Protection of Minors* sets the overall tone for the protection of minors online in China. At the same time, within the country's current legal framework for the protection of minors online, there are other subordinate laws that further supplement the *Law on the Protection of Minors*. The *Regulations on the Protection of Minors Online*, formulated by the State Council and effective as of January 1, 2024, is China's first comprehensive piece of legislation specifically dedicated to the protection of minors online. The *Regulations* further refine relevant provisions and promote the practical implementation of institutional designs. The *Regulations on the Protection of Minors Online* (hereinafter referred to as the "*Regulations*") primarily establish provisions regarding the promotion of digital literacy, the regulation of online content, and the prevention and treatment of internet addiction, with the majority of these provisions pertaining to short-video platforms.

First, the mandatory requirement for a "Minor Mode." The *Regulations* explicitly require internet service providers to implement a "Minor Mode." In November 2024, the Cyberspace Administration of China issued the "Guidelines for the Development of the Minor Mode on the Mobile Internet," which comprehensively launched the Minor Mode on internet service platforms. This mode aims to block the impact of risky information on minors and reduce their exposure to harmful online content.

Second, content isolation rules. The *Regulations* stipulate that online information that may affect the physical and mental health of minors must not be displayed in key areas such as the homepage's first screen, pop-up windows, or trending searches. At the same time, they require providers of online products and services to label such content and provide warnings about risky content to the greatest extent possible—for example, through text labels—thereby reducing minors' exposure to harmful information.

3. Latest Supporting Regulations: Measures for the Classification of Online Information That May Affect the Physical and Mental Health of Minors

To complement the *Regulations on the Protection of Minors on the Internet*, the *Measures for the Classification of Online Information That May Affect the Physical and Mental Health of Minors* (State Internet Information Office Circular No. 5 [2025]) (hereinafter referred to as the *Measures*), which will take effect on March 1, 2026, were jointly issued by the State Internet Information Office and seven other departments. The *Measures* implement the

requirements of Article 23 of the *Regulations* by further refining the definition of "information that may affect" and categorizing it into four identifiable and easily distinguishable types: information that may trigger or induce minors to imitate harmful behavior; information that may negatively impact minors' values; information involving the inappropriate use of minors' images; and the inappropriate disclosure and use of minors' personal information. The Measures also establish a mandatory prominent warning system, prohibiting the promotion of harmful information in prominent locations.

4. Criminal Provisions and Special Campaign Documents

At the criminal law level, China's Criminal Law does not contain a specific chapter on "Online Protection of Minors." Online protection for minors is addressed through the application of other criminal offenses. For example: the crime of disseminating obscene materials (Articles 363 and 364 of the Criminal Law), the crimes of insult and defamation (Article 246 of the Criminal Law), the crime of infringing upon citizens' personal information (Article 253-1 of the Criminal Law), and the crime of extortion (Article 274 of the Criminal Law), among others.

5. Practical Governance Measures

In addition to a series of legal and regulatory documents, there are also numerous direct practical measures. The National Radio and Television Administration (NRTA) launched a special campaign to address "AI-altered" videos and implemented targeted measures against micro-short dramas containing harmful content through the Administrative Measures for Micro-Short Dramas. In January 2026, during the National Radio and Television Administration's special campaign against "AI-altered" videos, Baidu's platform monitoring team discovered that a user named "Xiao Xiang Go Pranks" had posted a video titled Journey to the West Funny Dubbing Series: Journey to the West Funny Dubbing. The video used AI-generated technology to inappropriately alter the classic character depictions from Journey to the West, deviating from the original characters' imagery and the work's underlying meaning. Upon discovery, the platform immediately removed the video. Regarding the regulation of micro-short dramas, in February 2025, the micro-short drama platform "Hongguo Short Dramas" removed the production How Dare an Actor Insult a Patriot (listed as How Dare an Actor *** Insult a Patriot in some published lists). The reason for removal was that "the title was exaggerated and sensationalist, the content involved extreme insults, and it conveyed negative values." At the platform

implementation level, Douyin removed a cumulative total of 2.4 million pieces of inappropriate content targeting minors in 2025. However, while nearly 30,000 apps nationwide have implemented a "Minor Mode," only about 20 percent of minor users actively use this feature, revealing a significant gap between the availability of Minor Mode and its actual usage.

B. The Local Context of the Dissemination of Harmful Information Targeting Minors via Short Videos

1. User Base and National Context

Based on the current general situation regarding short video viewing among minors in China, the user base of minors watching short videos is enormous. According to the 5th National Survey Report on Internet Use Among Minors, the number of minor internet users in China reached 193 million in 2022, with an internet penetration rate of 97.2%. Short videos have become the primary gateway to minors' online lives.

2. Common Behavioral Characteristics of Minors' Internet Use

China has a massive user base of minors who watch short videos. At the same time, this group exhibits certain common behavioral characteristics, which can be analyzed from the following dimensions. In terms of time, 11.9% of minor users spend an average of more than two hours per day watching short videos on weekdays, while 7.2% spend more than five hours on holidays. The survey shows that 81.5% of the 282 minors surveyed have been exposed to short videos, with 30.92% watching daily and 40.17% watching on weekends and holidays.

In terms of content preferences, algorithmic recommendation mechanisms have turned short videos into "time black holes," allowing exploiters to precisely target users with harmful subcultures. Regarding efforts to circumvent *Regulations*, minors commonly borrow adult accounts, uninstall and reinstall apps, or use "guest mode" to bypass restrictions. Psychologically, minors are in the formative stage of developing their values; they possess a natural curiosity about sensational content, and their rebellious tendencies are particularly pronounced in the context of short videos.

3. Forms of Harmful Content Unique to Local Platforms

The survey revealed that 224 of the minors surveyed (64.74%) had been exposed to harmful content through short videos, including graphic violence (54.05%), harmful value systems (53.76%), content that endangers personal safety (43.35%), and vulgar content (36.13%).

Domestic short-video platforms exhibit the following unique forms of harmful content: distorted views on marriage and romance (promoting unhealthy attitudes toward dating and relationships), materialism and flaunting wealth (promoting extravagance and hedonism), soft-pornographic content (sexual innuendo and provocative material), AI-generated sensational micro-dramas (maliciously modified versions of classic animations), incitement to self-harm (encouraging the imitation of high-risk behaviors), and extreme weight loss (promoting distorted beauty standards), among others.

C. Practical Challenges in the Implementation of Current Legal Regulations

1. Challenges in Platform-Based Technical Regulation

Current platform technologies still have some shortcomings. First, technologies for identifying minors have limitations. Although the Guidelines for the Development of Youth Mode on Mobile Internet Platforms have standardized technical requirements, minors can circumvent restrictions by borrowing adult accounts or uninstalling and reinstalling apps. Platforms find it difficult to accurately verify users' true identities. Second, the adoption rate of Youth Mode is low. Its use largely depends on users enabling it themselves. Surveys show that fewer than 50 percent of users have ever set up Youth Mode, and only about 20 percent of minors actively enable it. A major reason for this is the one-size-fits-all nature of Youth Mode. Rather than categorizing minors based on specific criteria, the mode uniformly pushes content intended for very young children, causing minors to lose interest. Third, algorithms lack classification standards. Algorithms, driven by traffic, push sensational and stimulating content; there remains a significant gap between the "establishment of standards" outlined in the Measures and the "implementation of algorithms."

2. Challenges in Allocating Responsibilities Among Multiple Parties

In addition to platforms, another key party responsible is the guardian of minors; however, there is a problem with guardians failing to adequately fulfill their responsibilities. Although laws and *Regulations* clearly stipulate guardians' duties regarding the online protection of minors, specific penalty mechanisms for guardian negligence are lacking, and it is also difficult to monitor whether guardians are fulfilling their responsibilities and holding them accountable. Furthermore, the feasibility of guardians exercising strict supervision over minors at all times and in all places remains questionable. Overall, it is difficult for guardians to

exercise effective oversight over minors' online protection. Platforms also rely on limited content management measures, primarily employing a "one-size-fits-all" approach of outright blocking, rather than a refined, tiered system. Without a reasonable classification framework for harmful content, effective management is not possible.

3. Structural Shortcomings in the Governance Model

In addition to issues regarding responsible parties, the current governance model also has significant problems. The current approach relies excessively on rigid supply-side blocking-restricting content access through "Minor Mode" and removing non-compliant content through special cleanup campaigns. However, this approach fails to address the psychological characteristics of minors; it cannot eliminate at the root their curiosity about sensational content, and it is difficult to achieve effective governance.

4. Generative AI Creates New Regulatory Gaps

Beyond traditional fields, regulatory gaps in emerging areas of generative AI also warrant our close attention. In June 2025, China National Radio reported a typical case in which an AI chat app induced a minor to self-harm. A fourth-grade girl in Guangdong became obsessed with "Joseph," a virtual character in the "Dream Island" AI chat app. The character used romanticized phrases such as "99 roses hide 99 razor blades" to imply self-harm, leading the girl-whose name was Xiao Lin-to cut her wrists when she became emotionally distressed. A reporter's hands-on test revealed that the app's virtual characters began conversations by prompting users to "call me 'husband' first," and the platform featured a large number of extreme characters, such as "a yandere older brother" and "a young master with a personality disorder." As of early 2025, the platform had nearly five million registered users, nearly 80% of whom were young women. After the incident came to light, the Shanghai Cyberspace Administration summoned the operating company in accordance with the law and ordered a comprehensive rectification. Currently, legal *Regulations* regarding the production and dissemination of harmful content in the generative AI field remain relatively inadequate. How should responsibility be assigned, and what penalties should be imposed, when creators use AI to generate such harmful content and steer minors toward viewing it? This issue has yet to be resolved under traditional regulatory frameworks and represents a brand-new challenge we must confront.

AN EXAMINATION OF REGULATORY MODELS FOR HARMFUL CONTENT INVOLVING MINORS IN OVERSEAS SHORT-VIDEO PLATFORMS

A. The UK's Preemptive Algorithmic Prevention Regulatory Model Under the "Lawful but Harmful" Approach

1. Key Provisions of the Core Legislation, the Online Safety Act

The United Kingdom enacted the Online Safety Act, the world's first legislation establishing a duty of care regarding content that is "lawful but harmful to children." Applicable to "user-to-user" services, the Act adopts a zero-tolerance approach to protect children from online harm. The Act stipulates that technology companies bear legal responsibility for preventing and promptly removing illegal content, such as terrorist material.

2. The Molly Russell Case: Case Details and Its Role in Driving Legislative Action

In 2017, Molly, a 14-year-old British girl, took her own life after liking photos of self-harm on Instagram. Her father later discovered that the platform's algorithm had continuously fed her a "rabbit hole of dark content," and subsequently sued Instagram, alleging that the social media platform was an "accomplice" to his daughter's suicide. The coroner's ruling stated that the dark content pushed by the platform's algorithms was "one of the factors contributing to her death." This tragedy directly sparked public outrage and became the most immediate catalyst for the inclusion of regulatory provisions on "legal but harmful content for children" in the UK's Online Safety Bill.

3. Institutional Advantages, Value of Local Adaptation, and Limitations of Transplantation

The two UK bills set new, higher standards for age verification and age estimation tools, proving highly effective in determining whether users are children and proactively addressing the issue of minors potentially being harmed by harmful online content. However, adapting these systems to China still presents challenges, such as the relatively vague definition of "content that is lawful but harmful to children" and the increased operational costs for technology companies.

B. The U.S. Regulatory Model from the Dual Perspectives of Source Control of Children's Data and Algorithm Constraints

1. Core Legislation: COPPA (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act)

The U.S. Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) requires websites and online service

providers to notify parents when targeting children under the age of 12 or collecting information from them, and to obtain parental consent before collecting personal information from children. In addition to protecting children's privacy, the law also ensures that children's rights to free speech, information search, and expression are not adversely affected.

2. A Notable Case: The TikTok Fine for Children's Data

On February 28, 2019, TikTok, the international version of Douyin, was fined \$5.7 million by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) for illegally collecting information from children under the age of 13. In response, the TikTok team stated that it accepted the penalty and would launch a special version of the app designed for children under 13. This demonstrates that the enactment of the U.S. COPPA has played an effective regulatory role in overseeing internet operators.

3. Institutional Advantages, Value of Local Adaptation, and Limitations of Transplantation

By enacting legislation that clearly defines the obligations of operators and provides avenues for redress, the United States has addressed the shortcomings of a self-regulatory model, safeguarded the rights of children and their guardians to control their online privacy, and effectively strengthened the regulation and management of short-video platforms. However, during the implementation of the law, legal experts from various sectors have also pointed out that COPPA unduly restricts the freedom of speech of minors under the age of 12. When enforcing relevant provisions, particular attention should be paid to whether there is excessive regulation, in order to avoid unduly infringing upon minors' freedom of speech.

C. The EU's Model for Managing Systemic Algorithmic Risks on Platforms Under the Digital Services Act (DSA)

1. The Digital Services Act's Mandatory Obligations for the Protection of Minors, Substantial Fines, and Requirements for Algorithm Risk Assessments

The EU's Digital Services Act establishes a "tiered" regulatory framework for intermediary service providers: ranging from basic obligations for all intermediaries, to rules for hosting service providers, to supplementary provisions for online platforms, and finally to the strictest measures for hyper-scale platforms. It requires increased algorithmic transparency, the establishment of mechanisms for removing illegal content, and a ban on targeted advertising aimed at children or involving sensitive

data. Companies that fail to fulfill their obligations will face fines of up to 6% of their global turnover, and repeated violations may result in expulsion from the market.

2. Regulatory Practices for Algorithm Compliance on Transnational Short-Video Platforms

The introduction of the DSA is a systemic response to a series of transnational tragedies, such as the Molly case in the UK and the TikTok investigation in the U.S. The DSA directly authorizes the European Commission to launch investigations into platforms like TikTok to assess whether their algorithms harm the mental health of minors.

3. Institutional Advantages, Value of Local Adaptation, and Limitations of Transplantation

The EU's Digital Services Act creatively establishes a tiered system of platform obligations and regulatory responsibilities based on differences in user scale, achieving a refined institutional arrangement that applies the principle of proportionality under the goal of risk prevention. The Digital Services Act provides a reference for national legislation on digital platform regulation, but its *Regulations* in specific areas such as copyright and data protection are considered insufficient and may result in significant regulatory "loopholes."

D. The South Korean Model Led by Government Regulation

1. Key Provisions of the Amendment to the Act on the Protection of Children and Youth

Through amendments to the Act on the Protection of Children and Youth and other relevant legislation, South Korea has classified the possession, purchase, and viewing of child sexual exploitation material as serious crimes. It also imposes a legal obligation on online platforms to proactively identify, block, and preserve evidence of digital sex crimes.

2. Case Study: The "Nth Room" Case-Case Details and Background of the Legislative Amendment

In this case, criminals used social media and short-video platforms to lure and coerce women-including 16 minors-into filming extremely brutal videos of sexual exploitation, which were then distributed to over 260,000 paying subscribers in chat rooms. This scandal directly prompted the South Korean National Assembly to urgently amend the law, significantly increasing the relevant penalties and mandating that platforms assume unprecedented proactive monitoring responsibilities regarding digital sex crimes.

3. Institutional Advantages, Value of Local Adaptation, and Limitations of Transplantation

South Korea has experienced rapid development in information technology and boasts a high internet penetration rate; it is one of the countries with the strictest *Regulations* on online content. Building on a legal foundation, supported by technology, and aided by a rating and review system, South Korea has created a regulatory model with distinct Korean characteristics. Its limitation lies in its emphasis on severe post-incident penalties and a lack of flexible mitigation mechanisms.

E. Summary of a Cross-Regional Comparison of Regulatory Models

In summary, the United Kingdom focuses on content rating and product design in an effort to address the gray area of content that is "not illegal but harmful"; the United States focuses on data privacy and business models in an effort to cut off the data foundation that enables malicious algorithms; the European Union focuses on a macro-level, tiered system of governance, treating platforms as public infrastructure subject to strict regulation; and South Korea focuses on government regulation and deterrence through criminal law, adopting a zero-tolerance stance toward extreme sexual exploitation content. It is evident that the regulation of harmful online content is a challenge in the new era, and finding the appropriate balance between regulating such content and protecting the rights of minors is an issue that encompasses moral, legal, ethical, and technological dimensions.

PATHWAYS TO IMPROVING DOMESTIC SYSTEMS BY DRAWING ON OVERSEAS EXPERIENCES

The preceding analysis examined four models for addressing short video misconduct in the United Kingdom, the United States, the European Union, and South Korea. Although these models have many merits, they would all face challenges in being adapted to the Chinese context. For example, the UK's criteria for defining "legal but harmful" content are unclear; the U.S. approach of relying on parents to file lawsuits is incompatible with our administration-led model; the EU's reliance on platforms to self-regulate risks becoming a mere formality; and while South Korea imposes severe criminal penalties, its lack of educational guidance may easily trigger rebellious behavior among adolescents. In light of these circumstances, China must leverage its own strengths rather than blindly adopt foreign models. Building on the characteristics of our domestic system of coordinated management by cyberspace authorities, we should forge a China-specific path

featuring "preemptive technical interception, administrative oversight during use, and post-incident guidance through collaboration between schools and families."

A. Optimizing Preemptive Technical Regulation of Platform Algorithms

1. Implementing Age-Appropriate Design at the Product Level to Eliminate Addictive Algorithm Models

The UK's "Age-Appropriate Design Guidelines" emphasize that technology products must consider how to protect children as early as the design phase—for example, by mandating the disabling of addictive interactive features. In the Chinese context, the existing "Youth Mode" merely restricts what content can be viewed but fails to address the addictive mechanism that makes users "unable to stop once they start watching." We should require short-video platforms to modify their underlying logic, mandating that accounts belonging to minors have the "endless scrolling" and "auto-play next video" features disabled. By directly reducing these features within the product, we can curb children's time addiction to short videos.

2. Establishing Soft Classification Standards for Harmful Content

Content on short-video platforms is not limited to just "legal" and "illegal" categories. Many videos—such as those depicting self-harm or self-abuse, intentionally distorting aesthetic values, or even promoting materialism and a fascination with the bizarre—may not violate criminal law but can severely lower the moral standards of minors. For this content residing in a legal "gray area," China's algorithmic assessment should establish independent classification and blocking standards. Platforms need to develop specialized algorithmic tags to incorporate such content into their blocking systems, rather than resorting to a crude "one-size-fits-all" approach or ignoring it entirely. The establishment of classification standards will effectively fill the regulatory gap in the moral realm left by the law.

3. Implementing an Annual Algorithm Risk Assessment System for Platforms

The EU's Digital Services Act requires large platforms to conduct annual self-assessments of algorithmic risks; however, as mentioned earlier, these "self-assessments" often amount to little more than a formality. To address this shortcoming, China should establish an "administrative review" system. In other words, platforms must not only prepare their own annual risk reports but also submit these reports to the national cyberspace administration or to a third-party professional organization it has engaged for

substantive review. The government can conduct spot checks on the operational mechanisms of platforms' algorithms, compelling platforms to be "open and transparent" about their algorithms, thereby preventing platforms from adopting a perfunctory attitude toward regulatory oversight.

B. Establishing a Mechanism for Coordinating the Rights and Responsibilities of Guardians

In reality, many parents lack the time or technical ability to monitor their children's smartphone usage. Therefore, the law must not only impose requirements on parents but also set rules for platforms, using technological means to help resolve the challenges that parents "cannot manage."

1. Establishing a System of Prior Authorization for the Collection of Minors' Information

The core of the U.S. COPPA Act is straightforward: Internet companies must obtain parental consent before collecting children's information. Currently, the situation in China largely relies on remedial measures after the fact, making it difficult to prevent damage in advance. Building upon the existing real-name authentication system, we can stipulate that when platforms collect minors' personal information—such as browsing history and behavioral preferences—they must first send a clear notification to guardians and obtain their authorization. This would effectively block platforms' access to such data and curb negative content recommendations based on minors' data profiles at the source.

2. Establishing a System for Parental Informed Consent on Account Usage

Drawing on the approach of the U.S. KOSA Act, we should establish a "parent-linked early warning" mechanism. When the system detects that a minor's account is frequently online late at night or repeatedly accessing inappropriate content, the platform must immediately send a notification to the parents and grant them the right to "stop content delivery with a single click." In terms of rights protection measures, we should not follow the U.S. model of spending money on litigation, but rather adhere to a rights protection model that primarily relies on administrative interviews and penalties by the Cyberspace Administration, supplemented by public interest litigation initiated by the procuratorate. This way, parents can effectively protect their children's rights without having to expend significant effort on litigation.

C. Improving the System for Coordinating Administrative and Criminal Punishments for Severe Harmful Content

The law must show absolutely no leniency toward acts involving the production or dissemination of

extremely heinous content, such as child sexual exploitation or severe violence; criminal measures must be employed to impose severe punishment.

1. Refining Standards for Full-Chain Accountability for Severely Harmful Content

Following the "Nth Room" incident, South Korea urgently amended its laws, establishing a full-chain approach to combating crimes involving the dissemination of child pornography and sexual exploitation content-covering everything from production and dissemination to profit-making. China should also issue clear judicial interpretations to provide specific standards for criminal conviction regarding new types of crimes, such as "remote sexual molestation via short videos" and "inducing the filming of violent videos," thereby addressing the difficulties in sentencing and evidence collection encountered in actual case handling and establishing a powerful legal deterrent.

2. Streamlining the Transfer of Cases from Administrative Oversight to Criminal Justice

A profound lesson from the South Korean case is that platforms cannot adopt a hands-off approach. We must require short-video platforms to establish a mandatory rule to "report major leads involving minors within 24 hours" and break down information barriers between cyber administration, public security, and prosecutorial authorities. At the same time, we must learn from South Korea's lesson of "imposing only heavy penalties after the fact while neglecting education." While major crimes must be severely punished, for less serious offenses, the focus should remain on administrative reprimands and psychological counseling, ensuring a combination of cracking down on illegal activities and education and rehabilitation.

D. Establishing an Integrated, Flexible Guidance and Governance System Involving Families, Schools, and Communities

When it comes to regulating short-video content, relying solely on "hard measures" such as bans, fines, and criminal sentences often fails to truly resolve the issue. Instead, it tends to provoke a rebellious mindset among adolescents-the more something is prohibited, the more they want to view it. Therefore, it is essential to combine these measures with "flexible guidance" to transform adolescents' values at their root.

1. Offering Age-Appropriate Media Literacy Courses for Adolescents

Countries such as those in Europe, the United States, and South Korea generally lack regular media literacy instruction in their basic education systems. China, however, has a comprehensive national education

system that can leverage the strengths of collaboration among families, schools, and the community. We should introduce dedicated media literacy courses during the compulsory education stage. In elementary school, children can be taught to distinguish between reality and the virtual world; in middle school, they can learn to identify harmful social circles and guard against online scams. Through such general education, we can enhance minors' "online immunity" at the ideological level, enabling them to judge the quality of content for themselves.

2. Supporting the Creation of Positive Short-Video Content for Adolescents

Minors' addiction to harmful content often stems from a lack of channels for self-expression and emotional validation. Rather than imposing strict restrictions, it is better to provide effective guidance. We should collaborate with platforms to establish a "Youth Original Content Support Fund" to encourage minors to document their daily lives and showcase their talents. By providing a platform for creating high-quality content, we can fulfill their emotional needs, replacing the thrill of seeking out the bizarre with the satisfaction of positive social interaction. This approach reduces the desire to engage with harmful content at its root and alleviates the rebellious mindset caused by strict controls.

In summary, protecting minors from harmful short-video content cannot be achieved by blindly copying models from other countries. We need localized systems and a path that "combines firmness with flexibility": a "firm defense" consisting of algorithmic filtering, administrative reviews, and criminal enforcement, alongside a "supportive haven" comprising parental guidance and the provision of high-quality content. Only by truly integrating regulation with guidance can we provide minors with a safe, effective, and compassionate digital protective umbrella.

CONCLUSION

"A strong youth means a strong nation." Minors are the future of the nation and the hope of the nation; they are the driving force behind building a digital powerhouse in the era of digital intelligence. Protecting this special group of minors not only concerns the happiness and peace of hundreds of millions of families but also directly relates to the future of the nation and the destiny of the nation. In today's era of rapid digital technological development, any attempt to harm the physical and mental health of minors or erode their values must be subject to severe legal sanctions and collective opposition from the entire society. Grounded in

China's domestic context and drawing on an in-depth comparative analysis of legislative practices and regulatory experiences in the United Kingdom, the United States, Europe, and South Korea, we strive to further purge the online environment, clean up short-video content, increase the adoption rate of minor protection modes, strengthen online safeguards for minors, safeguard their healthy growth, and build a comprehensive protective barrier.

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