

# ***Research on the Impact of Nijigen Culture on the Psychological State of Dream Girls Taking Otome Games as an Example***

**Xinran Li**

*Beijing 21st Century International School, 100036, Beijing, China*

**Keywords:** Nijigen culture; Dream girl psychology; Otome game; Adolescent growth

**Abstract:** With the global spread of Nijigen culture and the mature development of the otome game industry, the "Dream Girl" phenomenon, as an important component of youth subculture, has gradually entered the public eye. This study focuses on the impact of otome games on the psychology of teenage Dream Girls. Through concept definition, mechanism analysis, and effect evaluation, it systematically explores how otome games provide a transitional space for emotional healing and self-exploration for adolescents through emotional compensation mechanisms (compensation for sense of security and control, compensation for idealized relationships, compensation for self-identity and subjectivity) and social psychological functions (low-risk social practice, community belongingness construction, social support and emotional resonance). However, it may also lead to negative impacts such as social avoidance, cognitive bias, and irrational consumption. Based on this, this study proposes a collaborative intervention strategy of "personal self-regulation + social diversified support", which not only enriches the theoretical research dimension of virtual intimate relationships but also promotes and guides adolescents to balance virtual entertainment and real-life growth.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Research Background**

In recent years, driven by the wave of digitalization, Nijigen culture has spread widely globally, becoming an important component of contemporary youth subcultures. In today's era, with richer communication media and more convenient access to information resources, the female-oriented cultural consumption market is bursting with vitality. As a representative of female-oriented romance simulation games, the otome games have gained popularity among young women due to their immersive narrative and emotional interaction mechanisms. The "Dream Girl" group, as a unique player demographic, has gradually entered the public eye in the development of otome games. The "Dream Girl" culture refers to the special perspective of interacting with game characters through original characters instead of oneself or the original characters themselves, engaging in fan creation and establishing deep emotional connections. Existing research indicates that otome games can satisfy players' emotional needs, provide emotional comfort to young women,

and fulfill their imagination of idealized intimate relationships[1]. However, excessive reliance on virtual relationships may lead to phenomena such as social skill degradation and even affect mental health.

## 1.2 Research Significance

In the context of the rapid development of Nijigen culture today, the otome games shape adolescents' cognition of intimate relationships through immersive narrative and emotional interaction mechanisms. Based on this, the "dream girl" community practices the reshaping of intimate relationships through original characters. Relevant research indicates that the intrinsic motivation for players to engage in the otome games lies in the need for emotional compensation and identity reconstruction[2]. However, current research on the relationship between Nijigen culture and the psychological state of dream girls among adolescents is still insufficient. This paper introduces the development of Nijigen culture, the phenomenon of "dream girls," and the otome games, and analyzes the impact mechanism of the otome games on the psychology of dream girls from the perspectives of emotional compensation mechanisms, social psychological functions, and virtual intimate relationship cognition. It proposes strategies for adolescents to balance virtual relationships and real-life social interactions, combining real-life cases. This study systematically explains how virtual emotions affect adolescents, enriches the theoretical research on virtual intimate relationships; at the same time, it provides an in-depth understanding of how adolescents construct their own dream girl images and psychological needs when accepting anime cultural products, helping to guide them to maintain healthy emotional cognition and a realistic view while enjoying and maintaining the entertainment and emotional sustenance of the virtual world.

## 2. Definition of Concepts

### 2.1 The Phenomenon of Dream Girls in Nijigen Culture

The word anime is taken from Japanese, which literally means two dimensions. It originally refers to the virtual world of comics and animation, opposite to the third dimension, and later evolved into the general name of print media [3]. Among them, the phenomenon of "Dream Girl" originates from players' love for characters, spontaneously creating from the perspective of participants, immersing themselves in anime, game original works or self created settings, and often using second person to enhance the sense of immersion. The phenomenon of "Dream Women" has driven the emergence of "Dream Women" literature, which is mostly spread on social platforms such as Xiaohongshu, lofter, and ao3 through graphic or narrative works. Related studies have proposed that the culture of dream girls is a low-cost way of emotional release, which obtains a sense of companionship through fictional romantic relationships, satisfies romantic and free fantasies, and also expresses self aesthetic and emotional needs[4]. In a word, the "Dream Girl" culture is an extension of anime group expression, which can be demonstrated through creation and emotional input, and provides emotional satisfaction for participants. Although there are some exclusive disputes, its essence is the way of expressing love in groups.

### 2.2 Basic Development of Otome Games & User Age Distribution

The Otome Games market is constantly maturing and expanding, and its development is closely related to technological changes and the growth of core user groups. On the one hand, with the continuous development of the number of manufacturers, more and more works are emerging, and the plot style is becoming more diverse. A large number of Otome Games have shifted from

handheld devices to mobile platforms, and the business model has changed from the traditional one-time buyout system to a free download+in app model. The theme of the content is not limited to romantic plots, and the character settings are more complex and three-dimensional. Japanese women's games have entered the market, while Chinese domestic women's games have also begun to rise. On the other hand, the core user group of Otome Games is relatively concentrated and has shown a trend of expansion in recent years. According to the analysis of the September 2022 data from Yuehu Data, women aged 20-25 are the most dynamic and potential consumer group. They have more free time and are the main users of social media. They enjoy modern and dramatic conflicts in the storyline[5]; Women aged 26-35 in the workplace are the core and strongest consumer group in the gaming industry, and they prefer works with complex plots and mature character designs; The group of adolescents aged 15-19, due to economic constraints and game regulations, are more potential users who prefer fantasy, suspense and other themes for the consumption of game related products. In summary, Otome Games has evolved from a relatively niche subculture to a mature, diverse, and commercially valuable market with a solid user base. With the development of technology and globalization, it continues to radiate new vitality.

### **3. The Mechanism of Psychological Impact of Otome Games on Dream Girls**

#### **3.1 Emotional Compensation Mechanism**

When individuals' needs are not met in real life, they will seek other ways to compensate for this deficiency and maintain psychological balance. One is that the Otome Games can compensate for a sense of security and control. Real emotional life is full of uncertainty, and players may be hurt, betrayed, and have unpredictable outcomes. In the Otome Games, players can engage in risk-free trial and error, almost achieving a "happy ending" to make up for the anxiety and unease in real emotional life[6];. Secondly, the Otome Games can compensate for idealized relationships. As a carrier of "love", the "Otome Games male protagonist" chosen by the player can match the player's "XP" in appearance and personality; On a spiritual level, the game team constructs three values that conform to modern standards in order to create artificial spiritual resonance. This kind of 'pure and flawless' emotional connection satisfies players' idealized sexual relationships, while also providing spiritual support for players who are unwilling to go online in real life. Thirdly, Otome Games can compensate for self-identity and subjectivity. The male lead of the "Otome Games" is designed as a "service provider", just like games such as Galgame that serve men, the "Otome Games" targets a specific group of women. For the design of "main control", attention should naturally be paid to its subjectivity, changing the passive behavior of "Japanese second" main control to active, and removing its dregs that do not conform to the characteristics of the times; In the design of the male lead in the "Otome Games", the implicit subordination of traditional gender relationships has also been changed: fundamentally, the player's protest against unreasonable plots is also a manifestation of subjectivity, from "being flattered by their lover" to "falling in love with someone who is already very good". This is not only a change in the direction of the game, but also a call for women's equality. In short, the Otome Games accurately identifies and fills in the difficulties and many deficiencies of modern women in emotional life, and this mechanism itself has no absolute good or bad.

#### **3.2 Social Psychological Function**

The Otome Games satisfies players' social and psychological needs through its unique interactive narrative. Firstly, implement low-risk social practice. Real social interaction may come with high costs and complexity, which can be a huge social pressure for women who are not good at handling

complex interpersonal relationships. In the Otome Games, players can practice "how to initiate conversations", "how to express emotions", and "how to handle arguments" without having to bear any real-life consequences. Successful interactive experiences can enhance players' self-efficacy. Secondly, satisfy the sense of community belonging. In real life, personal interests and hobbies may not resonate in social circles, leading to feelings of loneliness. The "Otome Games" has created a huge "like-minded community". In this community, players connect with "Dream Girls" who share the same interests through social media, fan creations, and other means, using "jargon" understood by insiders to meet deep social needs[7];. Finally, practice social support and emotional resonance. In real life, some emotions and troubles are difficult to gain true understanding from others, but in the Otome Games, virtual characters listen to the player's "voice", provide encouragement and comfort, and offer unique emotional support. At the same time, players can share their gaming experiences and feelings in the community, receive understanding from like-minded individuals, and thus gain community support. In short, it not only compensates for the lack of real-life social interaction, but also constructs a new social experience that integrates virtual relationships and online community connections.

## 4. Effect Analysis

### 4.1 Positive Impact

For most players, the Otome Games can serve as a transitional space for emotional refueling. Firstly, in times of real-life stress overload, the Otome Games can provide players with an emotional healing space. Through brief 'dreams', we can supplement the emotional appeals that are missing in real life, similar to supplementing essential nutrients, in order to better face challenges[8];. Secondly, by interacting with different types of characters, players can better understand their emotional needs, such as emotional interaction patterns like respect and good communication in games, which can also serve as positive references in real life. Once again, for players who may feel powerless or lacking confidence in reality, the powerful psychological empowerment and continuous positive suggestions that the Otome Games can provide can help players establish the belief that 'I am worthy of love' and infuse this confidence into real life. Finally, game based community communication is itself a positive social and creative activity that can enhance players' expressive and social skills.

### 4.2 Negative Effects

When players are unable to clearly distinguish the boundary between virtual and real, there is a high possibility of cognitive bias. Firstly, if players invest too much emotion and energy into virtual relationships, it may lead to a decrease in interest in real-life social interactions, avoidance of establishing intimate relationships in reality, and exacerbation of feelings of loneliness. Secondly, long-term immersion in idealized relationships may substitute the standards of game characters into real life, invisibly increasing expectations for intimate relationships and leading to disappointment with all non idealized relationships in reality[9];. Again, game mechanics can create a sense of scarcity and urgency, causing players to constantly invest in the fear of "missing out and no longer having". In order to further interact with their desired characters, players may engage in irrational consumption behavior, leading to economic pressure and regret. Finally, in extreme cases, individual players with pathological immersion find it difficult to detach from their dream girl identity, affecting their self-awareness and behavioral patterns in real life, resulting in unnecessary psychological conflicts when interacting with others.

## 5. Collaborative Intervention Strategy

### 5.1 Personal Intervention

Adolescents need to actively construct a self-regulated system of "virtual reality" balance, clarify the "compensatory attributes" of virtual love, and avoid using the perfect traits of virtual characters as the sole reference for intimate relationships in reality. Firstly, strengthen the connection with reality and reconstruct cognition. Individuals identify themselves and identify situations that "trigger" excessive play or immersion in fantasy (such as when reality is frustrated or lonely). Secondly, enhance individuals' sense of self-control. Adolescents develop a "conscious engagement" plan, including setting clear time limits for gaming (such as using mobile app locks), establishing "gaming rituals" (such as only rewarding after completing a certain learning task), and planning screen free leisure activities to transform unconscious "avoidance" into conscious "entertainment choices". Finally, transform the positive traits of virtual characters, such as resilience and empathy, into real-life action goals. Through participating in interest clubs, skill learning, volunteer services and other activities, adolescents can accumulate a sense of achievement in reality, gradually reduce the excessive dependence on virtual emotions, and realize the psychological transformation from "fantasy satisfaction" to "real growth"; At the same time, empathy and communication skills developed in community interaction are used to maintain friendship in real life. In short, individual intervention helps adolescents establish healthier and more controlled participation patterns, achieving a balance between virtual experiences and real life.

### 5.2 Social Intervention

Society needs to build a diverse and collaborative support network of "family industry media", creating an external environment that is more understanding, supportive, and able to provide positive guidance. Firstly, families should shift from "regulatory prohibition" to "empathetic companionship". Parents take the initiative to understand the content and logic of the Otome Games, and establish a communication bridge with adolescents through discussing character designs, sharing real-life emotional experiences, etc., to increase family interaction time and fill emotional needs. Secondly, the gaming industry should implement a "responsible entertainment" mechanism, optimize the anti addiction system for minors, and implant a "realistic growth storyline" to guide players to balance virtual and real worlds; At the same time, content creators and developers are attempting to incorporate more complex issues related to personal growth, real-life challenges, and relationship communication into the narrative of Otome Games. Thirdly, the media should objectively report the phenomenon of "Dream Girl", avoid extreme interpretation, create an inclusive and rational public opinion environment, and provide all-round support for young people's healthy participation in the Nijigen culture. To sum up, social strategies focus on building a system of understanding, tolerance, and positive alternative choices and support, so that young people can enjoy the fun of Nijigen culture independently and healthily, while maintaining a strong connection with the real world.

## 6. Conclusion

Against the backdrop of the digital wave and the rise of women towards cultural consumption, the Otome Games, with its immersive narrative and emotional interaction mechanism, has become an important carrier for young women to build virtual intimate relationships. The phenomenon of "dream girls" has become a subculture issue worthy of attention. This research takes the dream girl psychology of adolescent female game players as the core object, and combines the development

context of Nijigen culture and the mature trend of female game industry, systematically analyzes the influence mechanism and dual effects of virtual intimate relationship on adolescent psychological state. Research has shown that the "Otome Games" provides psychological support for adolescents through emotional compensation mechanisms, such as a sense of security, idealized intimate relationships, and self-identity. At the same time, it uses low-risk social practice and community belonging to construct a "transitional space" that meets their deep social needs, becoming a means for some adolescents to relieve real stress and explore emotional cognition. But when the boundary between virtual and real is blurred, excessive immersion may also lead to negative effects such as social avoidance, cognitive bias, irrational consumption, and even interfere with self-awareness in reality. Through the construction of a collaborative intervention system of "individual self-regulation+social multi support", we will help adolescents to achieve healthy development of their real selves while enjoying the fun of Nijigen culture.

## References

- [1] Xiaolan Guo, Siyue Tao. "Between "disconnection" and "connection": The emotional disorientation and behavioral adjustment of gamers - A grounded theory analysis based on otome games". *Future Communication*, vol.32, no.2, pp.128-129, 2025.
- [2] Peiyu Zhai. "A Study on Fan Culture of Otome Games from the Perspective of Participatory Culture". Master's Thesis, Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University, 2025.
- [3] Nijigen Culture. Baidu Encyclopedia, [online] Available: <https://baike.baidu.com/item/ACG/33795>
- [4] Leyuan Wang. "Exploration of the phenomenon of "dream girl literature" in fan fiction creation". *Journal of Inner Mongolia University of Finance and Economics*, vol.22, no.1, pp.148-152, 2024.
- [5] Xuewei Wang. "Emotion and Ritual: A Study on the Interactive Behaviors of Female Players in Otome Games". Master's Thesis, Zhejiang University of Media and Communications, 2023.
- [6] Zhen Li. "Subculture and Emotional Compensation: A Brief Analysis of the Mechanism of Girlfriend-oriented Games". *Media Criticism*, pp.221-228, 2019.
- [7] Yunzhen Han. "Intimate Relationships and Emotional Consumption: A Media Sociology Study Based on "Dream Girl"". *Today's Mass Media*, vol.33, no.12, pp.115-119, 2025.
- [8] Jun Wang, Yixiao Li. "The Motivation, Representation, Concerns and Guidance of Emotional Consumption for Female Gamers - Taking "Love and the Deep Sky" as an Example". *Journal of Langfang Normal University(Social Sciences Edition)*, vol.1, pp.11, 2025.
- [9] Mengrui Tian. "A Study on the Impact of Shoujo Games on Players' Romantic Beliefs". Master's Thesis, Shanghai International Studies University, 2025.