

"Tang Ping" of Chinese Youth: Origin Tracing and Social Identity Survey

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Abstract: Following the popularity of "involution", the word "Tang Ping" has rapidly become a popular word in China's Internet in recent years. What are the etymology, meaning, philosophical origin of "Tang Ping", and the future trend and social identity of "Tang Ping" culture? This is an interesting question. By tracing literatures, the etymology and philosophical source of "Tang Ping" are explored; According to the method of "species difference + adjacent genus", the meaning of "Tang Ping" is defined; then, the social identity of "Tang Ping" is analyzed by questionnaire and statistical methods; the future development trend and conditions of "Tang Ping" are inferred through logical deduction; Finally, based on the critical thinking of "Tang Ping" from the perspective of individual and society, this paper puts forward the social strategy to deal with the "Tang Ping", which is of certain significance to understand and correctly guide the changes of Chinese youth values.

Keywords: Tang Ping, Etymology, Philosophical origin, Social Identity

1. Introduction

"Tang Ping" is an emerging internet catchphrase after the epidemic. "Tang Ping" is rapidly popular on the Internet driven by the pragmatic motivation of speech subjects to express themselves and actions through words (Ma Ruohong, Du Min, 2021, P78). It reflects the mental anxiety and reality powerlessness of contemporary youth under the social pressure of internalization, and mirrors the psychological symptoms of contemporary youth and the problem context of the real society (Xiang yafang,2021,P146). "Tang Ping" culture is a double-edged sword. The spread of its negative impact will not be conducive to the construction of a positive, harmonious and stable cultural environment and social order (Xu Zhenhua, 2021, p139). Therefore, it is necessary to trace the etymology, meaning and philosophical origin of the word "Tang Ping", discuss the future trend of "Tang Ping" culture, understand the social psychological recognition of "Tang Ping" culture, solve the social structural dilemma from the institutional level, provide greater social tolerance and create a better development environment to young people, so as to avoid excessive "Tang Ping" of young people.

2. The etymological, meaning and philosophical origin of ---- "Tang Ping"

2.1. The etymology of Tang Ping: originated from the native land, accompanied by foreign meaning

The etymology of a word is either self generating or borrowing.

According to *Handian*, an online dictionary, the Chinese characters "Tang" has several meanings. One is "supine" (which is also explained in *Cihai* and other online dictionaries). The second is "objects lie flat or lie on the ground". The third is "to cease labor or effort". The fourth is "the euphemism of death". However, "Tang Ping" only appears in online dictionaries *Handian* and *Cihai*, and is only interpreted as "the state of making the body flat", which has not been found in many other dictionaries. Therefore, it is the multiple meanings of the word "Tang" that have contributed to the development of the meaning of the word "Tang Ping" in today's online world.

According to "six tone", a foreign language media focusing on Chinese news, in its news "tired of running in place, young Chinese 'lie down'", the popular word "Tang Ping" comes from a deleted post bar. "Since there has never been an ideological trend exalting human subjectivity in our land, I shall create one for myself: Lying down is my wise movement. Only by lying down can humans become the

measure of all things," the user wrote in his lying-down manifesto (Zhang Wanqing, Liu Mengqiu, 2021). The post has been resonated and supported by many young people, and the meaning of "Tang Ping" has also been enriched by followers. For example, "Tang Ping" is an action, not a feeling; Prioritize peace and tranquility of body and soul, choose to live a life of low desire, and do not "996" work to buy a house, get married, or have children; Accept your flaws instead of trying to change them; Dare not to identify money with happiness. The word "Tang Ping" has been popular on the Internet since then.

The creation and popularity of the word "Tang Ping" may be closely related to another word "involution" that appeared earlier. Although the word "involution" has not been found in various Chinese dictionaries, it has been popular on the Internet for several years.

"Involution", as an academic term, first appeared in German philosopher Kant's *The Critique of Judgment*, and was developed by Alexander Rovitch Goldenwitzer. He thought, after a cultural mode reached a certain final form, it could neither be stabilized nor transformed into a new form, and the phenomenon of constantly getting more complex internally was called "involution". Later, college students cited it to refer to internal competition, emphasizing that competition is unnecessary, irrational, and destroys human spirit.

This generation of young people in China has experienced cruel in school study and after-school training from primary school and even kindergarten to high school. Their only goal is to get a good admission ranking in the college entrance examination. Since the admission quota of the college entrance examination is allocated by province, every student in a province participates in after-school training or everyone does not participate in after-school training, the result may be similar. What makes them feel helpless is that they may have to participate in more similar internal competition in their college study, future life and work, their thoughts may suddenly fall into confusion and stagnation. The emergence of the word "Tang Ping" is more likely to be the expression and presentation of their negative emotions.

The phenomenon of Chinese youth "Tang Ping" has long been seen in China's neighboring countries. At the beginning of the 21st century, the saying of three-throwing generations (no love, no marriage, no children), five-throwing generations (no house purchase and no communication except three-throwing), seven-throwing generations (no dream and no hope except five-throwing), and even all-throwing generations prevailed among the young people in South Korea. In Japan, similar otaku, herbivores, Buddhist youth and Heisei abandoned houses and so on appeared in the 1990s (Chen Gong, 2021).

Therefore, from the etymology, although the word "Tang Ping" was born in China, its derived meaning may be borrowed from neighboring countries.

2.2. The meaning of "Tang Ping": it has specific conceptual and color meaning

Words generally include conceptual meaning, color meaning and grammatical meaning (Cao Yaodong, 2019, P24). The conceptual meaning of a word is the basis of the meaning of a word, the color meaning of a word is the additional meaning of a word, expressing people's feelings and experience, and the grammatical meaning of a word is the meaning beyond the meaning given by the grammatical structure after the word enters the grammatical combination, such as combination mode, combination function and so on. Here we only discuss the conceptual meaning and color meaning of "Tang Ping".

2.2.1. The conceptual meaning of "Tang Ping": it indicates a lifestyle of low ambition

How to define the concept of "Tang Ping"?

The most basic and common way to define a concept is "species difference + adjacent genus concept".

According to various interpretations of "Tang Ping" in online literature, the so-called "Tang Ping" refers to an action that advocates choosing a life of low desire, not identifying money with happiness, and advocating abandoning wealth and family to lead a cynical life, etc. the adjacent genus concept of "Tang Ping" should be "life style".

The species difference is generally manifested in four aspects: nature, function, relationship and occurrence. From the life style of "Tang Ping" people expressed on the Internet, they do not want to get married, buy a house, communicate with others, pursue neither money nor work achievements.

Therefore, "Tang Ping" as a way of life, it is different from other ways of life lies in the nature of this lifestyle. The difference of "Tang Ping" lifestyle can be summarized as calm state of mind, low work intensity and income, low desire and low pursuit.

To sum up, the concept of "Tang Ping" can be defined as: "Tang Ping" is a way of life that maintains low desire and low pursuit with a calm state of mind and low work intensity and income.

2.2.2. The color meaning of "Tang Ping": it is low-key but not necessarily morbid

The color meaning of words is attached to the level of objective things. It is the sublimation of people's emotional experience and subjective consciousness (Cao Yaodong, 2019, P28). The word "Tang Ping" carries a strong emotional connotation.

Feelings are always from the heart, explicit in words, and finally put into practice.

From the heart, "Tang Ping" expresses that some persons are tired of the pressure of life or work. Since this land has been making people mark time like a scroll, it is bound to bore people who had to participate in countless competitions in order to pursue success, but were unable to get something in the end.

From the perspective of speech, "Tang Ping" people most often use negative words such as "no" and "don't want". These have become their mantra and even their motto.

From the perspective of behavior, "Tang Ping" people adopt a low-key after calm, low desire, low work intensity, low income and low consumption.

So, "tired", "don't want to", "low-key" has become the emotional label of "Tang Ping". Is this morbid? Not sure.

2.2.3. The philosophical origin of "Tang Ping": it has the imprint of Laotse-Chuangtzu philosophy of inaction

The word "Tang Ping" seems to express a language ridicule of young people on life. In fact, it is a refined language to express a life attitude chosen by Chinese young people in the face of pressure and setbacks in the post epidemic period. It is not only a language expression, but also a philosophy of life. Therefore, it is necessary to trace the philosophical origin of "Tang Ping".

Many views of inaction philosophy of ancient Chinese Taoism are similar to today's "Tang Ping" philosophy. Perhaps this is the philosophical origin of "Tang Ping".

Zhuangzi Heaven and Earth says: "no joy in long life, no grief in early death, no honor in affluence, no shame in poverty" (Zhuangzi, 2013, P114). While *Zhuangzi • Mastering Life* says: "he wanders beyond the dirt and dust; free and easy, tending to nothing is his job" (Zhuangzi, 2013, P179). These views of not pursuing wealth, not pursuing fame, not pursuing career are very similar to the "don't want" philosophy of today's "Tang Ping" people, aren't they?

In *Zhuangzi • Free and Easy Wandering*, "When the tailorbird builds her nest in the deep wood, she uses no more than one branch. When the mole drinks at the river, he takes no more than a bellyful" (Zhuangzi, 2013, P33). In *Zhuangzi • Giving Away A Throne*, "When the sun comes up, I work; When the sun goes down, I rest. I wander free and easy between heaven and earth, and my mind has found all that it could wish for" (Zhuangzi, 2013, P262). Isn't it just the low desire life advocated by "Tang Ping" people that only seeks a roof over their heads, food and clothing, and advocates a nine-to-five comfortable life?

Zhuangzi • The Secret Of Caring For Life says: "your life has a limit, but knowledge has none. If you use what is limited to pursue what has no limit, you will be in danger" (Zhuangzi, 2013, P48) This is very similar to the reason why people choose Tang Ping because they are tired of the blow and destruction of human spirit caused by the unnecessary and irrational inner scroll competition.

Laotse-Chuangtzu's inaction philosophy may not be the mainstream in Chinese history, but it has also deeply affected generations of Chinese people. This generation of young people is deeply affected by the internal competition and suffers the double blow of the epidemic to people's economy and life. Laotse-Chuangtzu's inaction philosophy may have some soil for rebirth.

However, the inaction advocated by Taoism is a kind of survival wisdom, not the ultimate goal. Laotse's Tao Te Ching says that "Tao always does nothing but does everything" (Laotse, 2017, p1700). Therefore, the essence of Laotse-Chuangtzu's philosophy is to act according to the laws of nature and achieve positivity with negativity. If today's young people choose "Tang Ping" under the influence of

Laotse-Chuangtzu's philosophy of inaction, I wonder whether they can follow Laotse-Chuangtzu's philosophy and eventually do everything. Will society recognize this?

3. A survey of social identity of "Tang Ping"

In order to understand Chinese people's social recognition of the word "Tang Ping", an online questionnaire was specially designed for Chinese youth. Within one week, 674 responses were obtained and statistical analysis was performed using software SPSS19.

3.1. There are both consensus and disagreement on the cognition of "Tang Ping" in the society

The questionnaire investigates Chinese people's cognition of "Tang Ping" from four aspects: familiarity, word interpretation, reason speculation and consequence judgment. See Figure 1.

As can be seen from the figure, most people know or even are familiar with the word "Tang Ping", but the interpretation of it is divided. Nearly half of the respondents described "Tang Ping" as a form of "gnawing or decadent life without work (study)", while the other half described "playing while working or preparing for the future ". For the reason of "Tang Ping", it also shows cognitive confusion. More than half of the people believe that it is a subjective reason, which is "personal value orientation", but more people believe that there are objective reasons, which are "individuals can survive depending on family without efforts", or "too much work pressure ". As for the consequences of "Tang Ping", most people agree that it is "bad for individual, country and society".

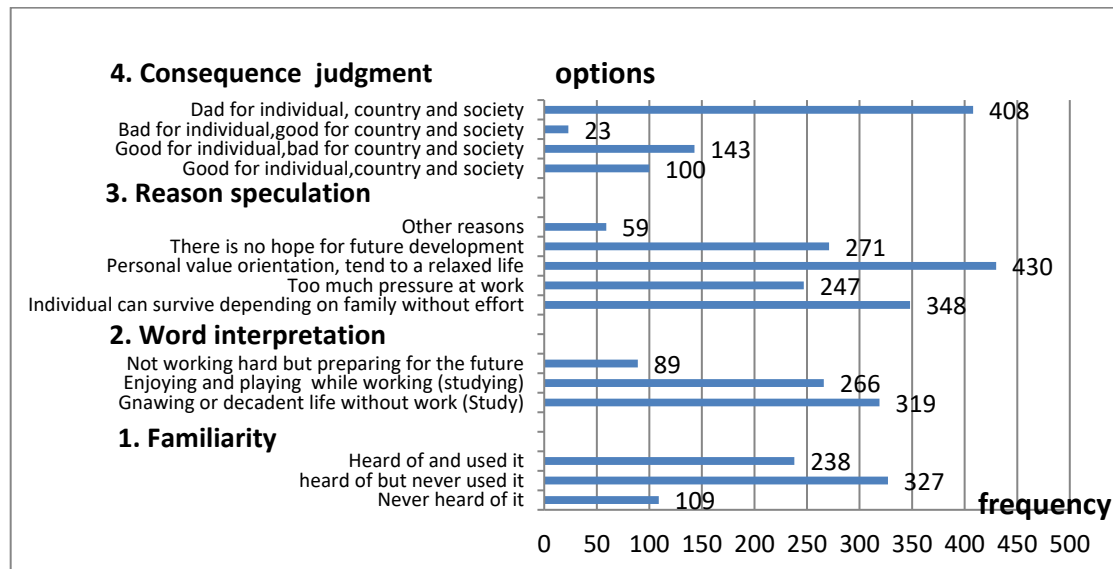


Figure 1: Cognition of "Tang Ping".

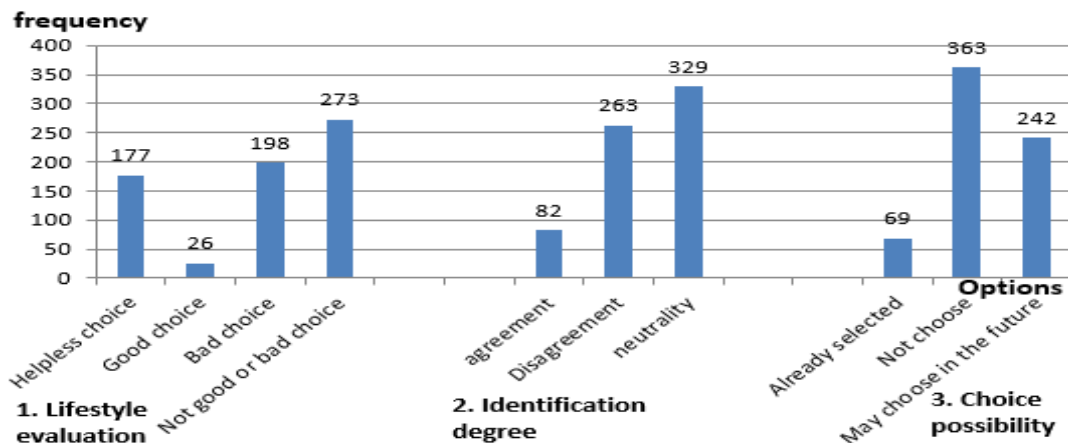


Figure 2: Identification of "Tang Ping".

The questionnaire investigates Chinese people's psychological identification of "Tang Ping" from three aspects: lifestyle evaluation, identification degree and choice possibility. As for the "Tang Ping" view of life, more people hold a neutral attitude towards it, but they will not choose it, indicating that modern young people on the one hand hold a more tolerant attitude towards it, on the other hand, they are not sure about it and will not easily follow it. But it should be noted that more than 30% of people do not rule out possible choices in the future. See Figure 2.

3.2. There are many subject differences in the social identification of "Tang Ping"

Chi-square test was used to determine whether there were significant differences in the identification of "Tang Ping" among the basic characteristics of the respondents.

SPSS 19 was used to test it, and it was shown that any expected frequency in this study was greater than 5, so chi-square test could be used. When $P < 0.05$, there is a significant difference. As can be seen from the data in Table 1, there are no significant differences in all option variables among respondents of different city categories.

Table 1: Chi-square test values.

Variables	Chi-square test (asymptotic sig. (bilateral))					
	8.Familiari ty	9.Definiti on	11.Consequen ce	12.Evaluati on	13.Identificati on	14. Choice possibility
Gender	0.085	0.247	0.855	0.000	0.132	0.677
Age	0.000	0.007	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Unit Nature	0.000	0.021	0.000	0.111	0.052	0.009
City Category	0.634	0.618	0.761	0.959	0.821	0.626

In terms of gender, there was only a significant difference in the evaluation of "Tang Ping". The data not displayed showed that men were more likely than women to say Tang Ping was a helpless choice, probably because men may be under more pressure in life or work.

There are significant differences across age groups in each survey. Specific statistics show that people in their 20s and 30s are more different from other age groups. this age group all has the largest proportion of people on these options, such as "heard of and used it", "enjoying and playing while working" and "good for individuals, bad for country and society", "helpless choice", "disagreement", "may choose in the future". To explore the reasons, young people in the age group of 20-30 years old have experienced two different forms of involution life (cruel college entrance examination and relaxed college course examination). These people are still under the age of 30. Although some people choose "Tang Ping", they think they may rise up in the future, so they think that "Tang Ping" is to enjoy while working; although some people haven't chosen "Tang Ping" yet, they don't know whether they can get rid of pressure and succeed in the future, so they think they may choose "Tang Ping" in the future. Therefore, they become the most contradictory age group.

There are also many differences in the cognition and identity of "Tang Ping" among people with different unit nature. The specific data show that the proportion of school students who have "heard of and chosen Tang Ping" is the highest, while the proportion of people at work is generally low, which may be related to the fact that the study at school shows the characteristics of "Involution" struggle more than other jobs in society; Although most people believe that "Tang Ping" represents a "decadent life", more people in administrative institutions or state-owned enterprises and central enterprises believe that "Tang Ping" represents "enjoying and playing while working". This may be because the work of administrative institutions or state-owned enterprises and central enterprises is less stressful and less likely to be promoted than that of private enterprises. Their work itself is similar to "Tang Ping".

Through investigation and analysis, it can be found that although COVID-19 has brought different influences to Chinese people, it is not the main reason for the "Tang Ping" of young people. More factors may still be "Involution".

4. Analysis of the future development of "Tang Ping"

4.1. The future development of "Tang Ping" has three directions: "Rouse", "Tang Ping" and "Decadence"

The life philosophy of "Tang Ping" shows that a group of young people are tired of endless inner struggle, disappointed and dissatisfied with the upgrading of life or work, and thus lose the motivation to pursue success. At this time, they choose "Tang Ping" instead of directly abandoning themselves, which shows that they are not willing to be decadent. From the perspective of logical deduction, the future development is no more than three directions: first, rouse; the second is to continue "Tang Ping", and the third is decadence. See Figure 3.

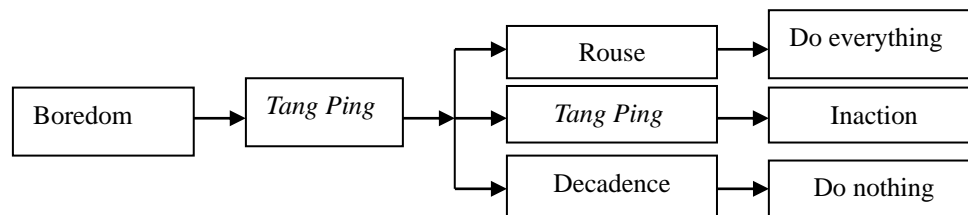


Figure 3: The future development of "Tang Ping" philosophy.

4.2. The development trend of "Tang Ping" depends on personal cognition and social conditions

Whether the future trend of "Tang Ping" is rouse, or continuing Tang Ping, or decadence depends on "Tang Ping" people's cognition and social conditions they will encounter in the future.

If they take "Tang Ping" as a short rest when they are tired, once they meet a good development opportunity in their future life or work, they are likely to rise again. Because they choose to "lie down", originally just unwilling but powerless. Now the opportunity is back, and the momentum is there, then, doing nothing will become doing all.

If "Tang Ping" people make it a habit to take for granted, or if their living or working environment doesn't change much, "Tang Ping" people may stay that way. Because this less stressful state of life or work can make them feel comfortable, they will not change even if there is a little opportunity to change. Inaction is always inaction.

If "Tang Ping" people regard "Tang Ping" as decadence that cannot extricate themselves, or indulge in gnawing, or their living and working environment is getting worse and worse, their life desire has to be lower and lower to adapt to the bad environmental changes, they may become more and more disappointed and decadent, and inaction will become doing nothing.

Therefore, in the future, it will not be surprising that words such as "rise", "struggle" will prevail, as well as similar slogans such as "decadence", "decline" will prevail.

5. Thinking on social coping methods of "Tang Ping"

5.1. "Tang Ping" is a legitimate choice, but it may erode society

What should we think of "Tang Ping"?

From an individual point of view, first of all, everyone has the right to choose their own lifestyle. We can't blame or even abuse someone because he chooses "Tang Ping". The emergence of the "Tang Ping" lifestyle, imitated by many young people, not only shows that young people are becoming more and more self-conscious, they will not care about traditional habits or other people's eyes, but also shows that society is becoming more and more tolerant. Secondly, people's body and mind need balance to maintain health. Many people choose Tang Ping because they feel tired in body and mind. And the low desire life of "Tang Ping" can keep his mind calm, so that his body and mind can rest. Thirdly, the "Tang Ping" person only keeps himself a life of minimum consumption, which does not increase the burden on society. From this point of view, "Tang Ping" itself is beyond reproach. Fourth, some people do not choose "Tang Ping", not because they do not want "Tang Ping", he may be forced not to want. "Tang Ping" is sometimes a helpless choice, not "Tang Ping" is also sometimes a helpless one.

From a social point of view, first of all, "Tang Ping" as a social psychology, its spread will erode the society. "Tang Ping" deviate from the lifestyle of mainstream society. It would deactivate social life. Secondly, the essence of some people's "Tang Ping" life is gnawing and decadent, which will be a way of life that destroys individuals, families and society. Thirdly, everyone will face many problems in life, if everyone gives up pursuing and chooses "Tang Ping" when encountering difficulties, the development and progress of society will lose momentum.

5.2. "Tang Ping" reveals some institutional problems that need to be actively dealt with

What should society do about "Tang Ping"?

Too many coincidences in one thing means they're not coincidences. If we think "Tang Ping" is a problem, then when more and more young people choose "Tang Ping", at least it shows that there is something wrong with our system. Perhaps the first thing society should do is to review our system and understand the institutional problem behind "Tang Ping": Is our social stratum solidified? Is there a shortage of communication between us and vulnerable groups? Do we have too little help for socially disadvantaged groups? Second, society should revise our system to encourage those who choose "Tang Ping" to rise again: it should provide a shade for them to take a break when they feel tired, but also, when appropriate, encourage them to get up and face life more positively. Third, society should also build a protective wall to prevent "Tang Ping" from becoming a trend. At present, "Tang Ping" people is only a small part of the society, most of the people in the society still belong to the strong running with tears, but even the best machine will be scrapped if it runs continuously at full load for a long time. Sometimes it is the constant struggle of others (such as other family members) that creates the foundation for "Tang Ping". Those "Tang Ping" people should stop "Tang Ping" at the right time so that others can have a rest. So, sometimes, we should also timely say to those: you should get up!

6. Conclusion

From an etymological point of view, it is the multiple meanings of the word "Tang" that have contributed to the development of the meaning of the word "Tang Ping" in today's online world. The word "Tang Ping", related to the background of "involution", was born in China, but its derivative meaning may be borrowed from neighboring countries.

By definition, "Tang Ping" is a lifestyle of low desire and pursuit with a calm mind and low work intensity and income. "Tired", "don't want to", "low-key" are its emotional label.

Many viewpoints of ancient Chinese Taoist "Inaction" philosophy are similar to the propositions of "Tang Ping". Perhaps this is the origin of "Tang Ping" philosophy. However, Taoism's seemingly negative "doing nothing" is ultimately for positive "doing everything", and the current "Tang Ping" trend of Chinese youth is not clear.

In terms of cognition, most people in Chinese society are familiar with the word "Tang Ping", but there are different interpretations of it, and the causes of its emergence show cognitive confusion.

In terms of identity, people of different genders only have significant differences in the evaluation of "Tang Ping", while people of different ages have significant differences in all variables, while unit nature has significant differences in most variables, and city category has no significant differences in all option variables.

The future development direction of "Tang Ping": One is rouse; another is to continue "Tang Ping", the third is decadence. How to go will depend on the individual cognition of "Tang Ping" people and the changes of social conditions in the future.

From a personal point of view, "Tang Ping" is a lifestyle choice with rights and it itself is beyond reproach. Sometimes "Tang Ping" is a helpless choice, sometimes not "Tang Ping" is also a helpless choice.

From a social point of view, "Tang Ping" as a way of life deviated from the mainstream society, its spread will erode the society.

When more and more young people choose "Tang Ping", it shows that there are problems in some aspects of our system. Society should revise our system, encourage those "Tang Ping" people to rise up again, and build a protective wall to prevent "Tang Ping" from becoming a trend.

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