

## Reading as Moral Afternoon Tea: An Empirical Study on the Compensation Effect between Literary Novel Reading and Readers' Moral Motivation

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**Abstract :** The belief that there is a strong relationship between reading narrative and morality has generally become the basic assumption of scholars, philosophers, critics, and cultural critics. The virtuality constructed by literary novels inspires readers to regard the narrative as a thinking experiment, creating the distance between readers and events so that they can freely and morally experience the positions of different roles. Therefore, the virtual narrative combined with literary characteristics is always considered as a "moral laboratory." Well-established findings revealed that people show less lying and deceptive behaviors in the morning than in the afternoon, called the morning morality effect. As a limited self-regulation resource, morality will be constantly depleted with the change of time rhythm under the influence of the morning morality effect. It can also be compensated and restored in various ways, such as eating, sleeping, etc. As a common form of entertainment in modern society, literary novel reading gives people more virtual experience and emotional catharsis, just as a relaxing afternoon tea that helps people break away from fast-paced work, restore physical strength, and relieve stress in a short period of leisure. In this paper, inspired by the compensation control theory, we wonder whether reading literary novels in the digital environment could replenish a kind of spiritual energy for self-regulation to compensate for people's moral loss in the afternoon. Based on this assumption, we leverage the social annotation text content generated by readers in digital reading to represent the readers' reading attention. We then recognized the semantics and calculated the readers' moral motivation expressed in the annotations and investigated the fine-grained dynamics of the moral motivation changing in each time slot within 24 hours of a day. Comprehensively comparing the division of different time intervals, sufficient experiments showed that the moral motivation reflected in the annotations in the afternoon is significantly higher than that in the morning. The results robustly verified the hypothesis that reading compensates for moral motivation, which we called the moral afternoon tea effect. Moreover, we quantitatively identified that such moral compensation can last until 14:00 in the afternoon and 21:00 in the evening. In addition, it is interesting to find that the division of time intervals of different units impacts the identification of moral rhythms. Dividing the time intervals by four-hour time slot brings more insights of moral rhythms compared with that of three-hour and six-hour time slot.

**Keywords :** digital reading, social annotation, moral motivation, morning morality effect, control compensation

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