

Research on Improving College Students' Digital Literacy Education in the Era of Social Media

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Abstract: Social media has become a significant presence in our lives. This paper clarifies the meaning of social media, analyzes its characteristics, and elucidates the issues in improving college students' digital literacy in the era of social media. In response, this study proposes innovative approaches to enhance college students' digital literacy from three perspectives: cultivating students' time management awareness, enhancing students' information discernment skills, and improving the construction and supervision of network management platforms. The primary objective is to improve the methods of enhancing college students' digital literacy and better assist them in healthy growth within the context of social media.

1. Introduction

In just two decades, social media has rapidly developed and profoundly influenced various aspects of life and work. It refers to the ability of anyone to express their opinions and views at any time and from any location. Social media, also known as "citizen media" or "personal media," originated from the concept of "We Media" introduced by the American Press Institute's Media Center in 2003 [1]. The growth of social media platforms has greatly enriched the lives of college students while subtly transforming their lifestyles. Especially during the pandemic, most universities have adopted online teaching, and even during periods of returning to campus, intermittent online education continues. This has led to the multi-channel and networked development of student management in higher education institutions. The impact of various social media platforms on student management during online education cannot be ignored. Therefore, it is crucial to address the issue of how to effectively utilize various social media platforms to enhance college students' digital literacy.

2. Characteristics and Impacts of Social Media in the Digital Age

In today's developed social media environment, any individual can express personal opinions, post comments, disseminate social hot topics, and even supervise government and corporate efficiency. Due to its comprehensive information coverage, substantial influence, and difficult regulation, social media has become an influential force in public opinion, indicating the arrival of the social media era.

2.1 Extensive Information Coverage through Social Sharing

In the era of social media, a wide range of social networking applications, such as Weibo, WeChat, TikTok, Kwai, Bilibili, Today's Headlines, and Zhihu, present a comprehensive and multi-channel pattern of social sharing and coverage. Nowadays, it is nearly impossible to shield oneself from the bombardment of various information unless one refrains from using smartphones. Additionally, with the development of technology, artificial intelligence and the Internet have become indispensable in various fields, including college student management. Campus apps, online platforms, instant messaging groups (e.g., DingTalk and WeChat), and various educational and management apps (such as Yiban, Xuexi Qiangguo, Yunbanke, Yike, Zhiye Yun, and Xiwo Shouke) have integrated students' learning and management into the online realm. Therefore, it can be said that college students' learning in the social media era is an "E+" multimedia learning, which refers to "Internet + multimedia" learning. Correspondingly, student management during this period exhibits multidimensional characteristics.

2.2 Significant Influence of Social Media Communication

Social media enables ordinary individuals to have a channel for free expression. Besides its extensive and rapid information dissemination, it possesses significant influence. With a large number of social media users, including college students who are registered on various platforms, and ordinary individuals with smartphones who have one or more social media accounts, the user base of social media is extensive. The daily volume of information and views shared on social media greatly enhances the impact of communication. In traditional media, only authorized and authoritative media outlets could participate in dissemination. People could only spread media content to those around them or within a limited scope. This limited the dissemination range and the influence of traditional media compared to social media. In the social media era, as soon as an event or topic attracts attention, it quickly becomes viral through sharing and dissemination. The influence of social media is undeniably significant [2].

2.3 Increased Difficulty in Regulation due to Diverse Information Channels

The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology is responsible for internet construction and provides technical support and information security maintenance for computer networks. The National Internet Information Office and local governments' "cyber administration" offices coordinate the regulation of social media. However, when it comes to the monitoring and regulation of content on various social media platforms, the responsibility of each platform is often lacking. As social media platforms operate as profit-seeking enterprises rather than non-profit organizations, their development goals primarily focus on gaining traffic and attention. They often adopt a laissez-faire development approach, lacking the necessary sense of social responsibility and moral standards found in traditional media. Furthermore, the mechanisms for content review on social media platforms are relatively weak. Platforms prioritize user acquisition, requiring only a mobile number or email for successful registration. There are almost no admission requirements or background checks during registration, and content posted by users is difficult to monitor for legality and compliance. In the early stages of social media development, content creation requirements were low, resulting in mixed quality content. Although relevant policies and regulations have been introduced by the government, it is still challenging to effectively regulate content, both in terms of images and text, as certain technical methods can bypass automatic checks. Therefore, in the current era of diverse information exchange through social media platforms, both the platforms and relevant regulatory bodies face challenges in effective supervision and control.

3. Challenges in Enhancing College Students' Digital Literacy in the Era of Social Media

Currently, social media platforms in China have experienced rapid development, but a comprehensive regulatory mechanism is yet to be established. In the context of student management in higher education institutions, social media dissemination is a double-edged sword. While it can promote modernization and convenience in student management, it also presents challenges and threats in terms of managing students' online time, discerning online information, and shaping their values.

3.1 Concerns Regarding Time Management

Due to the unrestricted nature of social media platforms in terms of information dissemination, browsing, and sharing, various types of information spread rapidly. Surveys have shown that a significant portion of students spend more than one hour per day on platforms such as Weibo, WeChat, and live-streaming apps, with many exceeding three hours per day. During the online teaching process amid the pandemic, teachers have noticed issues such as students' lack of self-discipline and inability to concentrate. To effectively enhance teaching and student management, reforms are needed in terms of the network environment, teaching resources, teaching management, instructional methods, and teacher training. However, even with strict attendance and assessment systems in place during online education, it remains challenging to improve students' self-awareness and self-discipline in online learning. Some students lack motivation, oversleep, use their smartphones during class, or even give up entirely, leading to the risk of failing or needing to make up for exams. Effectively motivating students in online classrooms and improving their time management skills pose significant challenges for teachers, counselors, and school administrators [3].

3.2 Hazards in Discerning Online Information

In the virtual world of the internet, students' self-awareness expands. Students who may be introverted and poor at communication in real life might behave differently online. Those who have unmet needs and desires in their daily lives tend to seek satisfaction online. Consequently, even adult college students lack the ability to discern the vast amount of information found on social media platforms. According to a survey conducted by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, nearly 60% of college students habitually watch online live streams. While various social media platforms broaden students' access to information, they also influence their worldview, values, and perspectives on life. After being released from the intense academic pressure of high school, many students enter university campuses without the supervision and influence of homeroom teachers, parents, or the pressure of college entrance exams. Their sense of freedom expands, making it easy for them to become lost in the diverse virtual world. According to data from the China Internet Network Information Center, more than 85% of internet users are aged between 18 and 30, with a majority having at least a college degree. The number of college students addicted to the internet is nearly 8%, and first-year students are more prone to internet addiction. Unregulated content on social media, including images and information, is often used to attract attention and spread various sensational or vulgar content and viewpoints. This causes college students to lose their ability to discern information in the overwhelming sea of information, leaving them feeling bewildered.

3.3 Impacts on the Formation of College Students' Values

Youthful college students are in a critical period of value formation. At this stage, they have

basic perspectives and understandings of the world around them. However, their viewpoints are generally one-sided and radical, lacking a comprehensive understanding from a historical materialism perspective. Moreover, their minds are not yet fully mature, and they struggle to handle certain information and issues appropriately. The myriad of social media information also influences their spiritual world. With strong curiosity but weak self-control, college students lack the ability to correctly discern and resist negative information on social media. Without proper guidance, this can potentially affect the formation of their worldview, perspectives on life, and values, which will also have an adverse impact on their academic achievements. Therefore, enhancing college students' digital literacy faces significant challenges.

4. Analysis of Paths to Enhance College Students' Digital Literacy

Currently, despite the challenges posed by the characteristics of social media, it has become an inevitable part of college students' lives. To make social media a helpful tool in student management, efforts should be focused on cultivating students' time management awareness, improving their information discernment abilities, and strengthening the supervision of social media platforms.

4.1 Cultivating Students' Time Management Awareness

In traditional student management approaches, student life and interpersonal relationships are relatively simple, mainly within the campus. Therefore, life and time management for students are relatively controllable. However, in the era of social media, various online activities such as online learning, surfing the internet, entertainment, and online shopping result in students being constantly attached to their devices. This leads to time fragmentation and a lack of concentration, with students spending a significant amount of time on meaningless fragmented reading, entertainment, and online chatting. Even though most smartphones and platforms have adolescent modes, college students are adults and no longer fall into the adolescent category. Therefore, it is essential to establish time management awareness in students, not only during the initial stage of their freshman year but also through effective communication and collaboration between the counseling team, students, and parents, especially during online teaching periods. This cooperation helps create a conducive environment for joint nurturing, and teaching students time management skills. By teaching the importance of time management in the era of social media and providing training and reinforcement methods, coupled with reminders through various campus network platforms, freshmen can develop a clear understanding of the purpose of using smartphones and cultivate self-control [4].

4.2 Improving Students' Information Discernment Abilities

In traditional student management models, face-to-face communication is the primary means of delivering important information and ideas through lectures, class meetings, discussions, and various presentations. However, during the pandemic and in future teaching scenarios, it has become relatively difficult to gather a large number of students for face-to-face meetings. Online meetings and information dissemination have become essential. Although information is accessible as long as there is a smartphone and an internet connection, the challenge lies in ensuring that every student receives important information promptly and clearly and takes appropriate actions accordingly. The ability to discern adverse social media platforms is the foundation for protecting students from the influence of harmful information. It is not only about ensuring that students receive relevant learning information without being affected by irrelevant platforms but also about shaping students' worldview, values, and perspectives on life. Therefore, it is crucial to improve

students' ability to discern online information as soon as possible. When students have awareness of the negative effects and potential hazards of online information, they can self-regulate and proactively filter out such information, reducing the negative impact of unhealthy online culture. Schools can adopt the methods used in anti-fraud campaigns, disseminating propaganda through various channels and repeatedly displaying the content on campus platforms. By delivering lessons on how to make scientific use of the internet, students' self-discernment and self-control in the era of social media can be effectively guided and supported. Additionally, teachers and educational support staff should make use of various opportunities to present real-life cases, raise awareness among students about identifying false and harmful information, and guide them in using smartphones correctly. Only through collaborative efforts can students develop effective self-control in managing their online activities.

4.3 Enhancing the Construction and Supervision of Network Management Platforms

College students must possess basic time management and information discernment abilities, which are the prerequisites for innovative student management models in the era of social media. Achieving this prerequisite depends on the implementation of comprehensive supervision and the construction of network management platforms. The supervision should involve a three-tier system: macro-level government control, social technological support, and micro-level actions implemented by educational institutions.

At the macro level, the government should establish a sound network supervision mechanism. In addition to improving laws and regulations for social media regulation, punishment mechanisms and measures for shutting down harmful platforms should be in place to create a favorable online environment and order. It is crucial for social media platform companies to recognize the importance of platform security and quality control, implementing strict self-regulation to eliminate negative online information and lay the foundation for the sustainable development of positive, constructive, and valuable online platforms.

At the intermediate level, IT technology companies should expand application platforms and leverage the latest technologies such as metaverse and virtual computing to provide a more efficient and secure user experience for campus users. During periods of special online teaching and internships, simulations and virtual experiences through live streaming or VR can be employed to simulate online class meetings, lectures, and practical experiences. This approach enhances students' enthusiasm and interest in participating. Various simulated scenarios can be created using artificial intelligence and convenient simulation applications, promoting student engagement and fostering problem-solving abilities. It also facilitates supervision of students' use of social media platforms, aligning with the inevitable trend of development in the era of big data [5].

At the micro level, educational institutions should clarify the goals of network management, strengthen the construction of teaching staff, and enhance the digital literacy education of teachers and students. In the era of social media, students' practical path to improving digital literacy primarily lies in the experience gained from campus network platforms. Therefore, universities should establish social media accounts at various levels (from the university level to departments) and encourage students to actively participate in the operation of these platforms through channels such as WeChat official accounts, Douyin (TikTok) accounts, and Weibo accounts. By engaging in platform operations and selecting content to be disseminated, students can enhance their media innovation and creativity while also improving their media discernment abilities. Additionally, to effectively supervise campus network platforms, educational institutions should form a teaching staff dedicated to guiding and supervising online activities. All faculty members should be proficient in the use of smart devices such as computers and smartphones, possess multimedia

application skills, and effectively disseminate selected information. It is essential for all staff to be aware of the changing times, with no age limit on their acceptance of social media platforms. They should actively participate in multimedia literacy training activities. Only when the teaching staff themselves possess proper digital literacy can they play their roles effectively. Therefore, to ensure effective supervision of network management platforms, educational institutions should provide regular training and education for teaching staff regarding network management and continuously cultivate a workforce equipped with relevant skills. Establishing counseling studios, inviting media experts as training consultants, and conducting relevant skill and technology training will help build a strong teaching staff proficient in multimedia applications.

5. Conclusion

The social media network has created a complex virtual world that is omnipresent and profoundly impacts real-life activities. Ignoring or neglecting social media platforms is an irrational attitude. Only by fully understanding the era of social media and the characteristics of online information can we effectively utilize it. Universities, as leaders in the production and innovation of advanced knowledge, need to transform their service management concepts and recognize the challenges faced in managing college students in the era of social media. They must respond appropriately to enhance management efficiency. Building a sound online order is not an overnight achievement. Enhancing college students' digital literacy in the era of social media is a realistic and pressing issue. In the process of exploring innovative models, government, society, teachers, students, and parents are all vital forces that should collaborate and work together to achieve this goal.

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