

The Reasons for the Spread of "Information Virus" among College Students and Paths for Prevention from the Perspective of New Media

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Abstract: In the context of new media, the problem of "information virus" such as rumors, false information, prejudice and extreme speech is particularly prominent. During college students' use of new media, the reason for the formation and dissemination of information virus lies in the "group loss" caused by group interaction and narrow cognition of intensified group differentiation out of the need of social support and social performance. To block the spread of information virus, we should take the lead in occupying some nodes to reduce the transmission path of information virus, use group collaborative identification to block information virus and use platform mechanism and technology to help curb its community transmission.

Keywords: New media, Information virus.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the accelerated fission and rapid development of new media have profoundly changed the way the public obtains and interacts with information. Rumors, false information, prejudice, extreme speech and other "information viruses" are becoming increasingly prominent. New media has also been criticized for becoming the main breeding bed and transmission media of information viruses. College students are the most extensive, active and featured group of new media users. At the same time, they are the same group that undergo the critical period of rapid psychological growth and maturity. Their worldview, outlook on life and values are highly vulnerable to the influence of the external environment and in today's age, public opinion on the Internet. In such a context, the Sixth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee further stressed that ideological work is to build the heart and soul of the country and nation. Cultural confidence is a more basic, broader and deeper confidence and the most basic, deepest and lasting force in the development of a country and nation. Therefore, analyzing the causes why new media facilitate the spread of information virus and exploring the strategies to curb such spread are of great significance to strengthen the ideological and moral construction among young students and cultivate and carry forward the socialist core values.

2. The Connotation and Main Characteristics of "New Media"

The concept of "new media" in the modern sense was formally put forward by Peter Goldmark in 1967, which refers to the innovative application of electronic media. However, the academic circles have not formed a clear consensus on the definition of the concept. Some researchers hold the view of "relativity" and believe that new media is a media form relative to traditional media (Peng L., 2016); Whereas some scholars hold the view of "interconnection theory", that is, new media is a digital media with strong interactive function on the basis of interconnection (Gao L., 2015). In addition, there have also been conceptual definition methods such as

"number theory" (Hu Q., Lin X., 2014), "scale theory" (Gao Y., 2014), "multidimensional theory" (Hao Y., et al., 2017).

As a new type of "compound communication" (Peng L., 2016), new media communication has multiple new characteristics. At present, the field mainly studies the characteristics of new media communication from five aspects: The equality and freedom of discourse subjects (Ji H., 2015); The magnanimity and immediacy of information (Ye H., 2018; Shareef M. A., Kumar U., et al., 2011); The interactivity, quickness and sharing of communication forms (Wang J., 2014); The openness of context virtuality and personalization (Zeng F., HE S., 2018; Weerakkody V., et al. 2013) and concealment and community of information sources (Shi H., 2018).

This paper holds that the qualitative stipulation of new media lies in firstly it is not only the extension but also the creation of human essential power; also secondly the extension of both time and space of ideological and political practice education; and last but not least a functional integrated environment that affects the whole process of ideological and political education. The main characteristics of new media are the multi-discourse subject context, the multi-directional interactive environment and the coupling of virtuality and reality.

3. The Root Causes of the Breeding and Spread of Information Virus Among College Students

When college students use new media, the formation and transmission of information virus occurred are often due to the following causes:

(1) As a need for social support and social performance.

College students often post or forward content on social media platforms out of the need for individual visibility, social support (seeking views consistent with their own values, position and views), social performance, emotional interaction, etc. Therefore, the content shared by the new media platform has such functions as performance props, relationship lubricants, circulating social currency and arguments to strengthen their own positions and views. The

factors contributing to their rapid diffusion includes whether the content is consistent with the individual's interests and positions, whether it has social conversation value, whether it helps reflect their sense of existence, improve their social image, maintain and expand social networks or help college students integrate into the group. This also means that when college students post or disseminate information, they are not always out of objective judgment or rational measurement of the information itself. In many cases, they are subjective and emotional. As a result, the individuals become the disseminators of various information viruses.

(2) "Group loss" caused by group interaction.

The communication in the new media platform has contributed to the formation and interaction of various types of groups. The phenomena of "social facilitation", "social slack", group polarization, herd psychology, de-individualization and anonymity revealed by research on social psychology stimulate irrationality among groups to varying degrees. Group interaction is also prone to information masking and echo chamber effect. Within the homogeneous group, the information correction mechanism is also likely to be restrained, which affects the judgment of college students and even leads to irrational words and deeds. In an environment abound with network interaction, the psychological characteristics of college students may also make them more likely to be dominated by simplified binary opposition thinking, and easily fall into labeling, choosing sides, etc. rather than rational judgment and thinking. The group loss caused by group interaction may easily lead to the breeding of information viruses within the group and even outward spread of the information.

(3) Cognitive narrowness exacerbated by group differentiation.

The Chinese society is in an important transition period. The value orientation of contemporary college students also showcases a diversified trend along the development of society. The choice and expression of values has become an expression of individual rights, and the Internet has furthered the fragmentation of ideas. When young students are no longer led by a single value system, the conflict of opinions in various public spaces will become more prominent and the irrational expressions in the process of conflicts will also be likely to intensify. Due to the existing division of social stratum, culture and values in the real society, the different types of college students are also differentiating to various dimensions in the net community, forming various types of circles and levels. Their information sharing and attitude expression will naturally be affected by their own circles. The network even provides a kind of flowing and imaginary psychological community in which similar people gather to the same "height" just like gaseous molecules to form a "stratosphere", and the opinion climate of the whole network may have significant differentiation between different stratospheres. When they cannot be an objective observer or neutral judge, they can only rely on the influence of others and the "consensus" within their own group.

4. Countermeasures of Blocking the Transmission Path of Information Virus

The dissemination of new media information takes the platform as the hub, individual nodes as the connection, and interpersonal networks and groups as the communication

channels. Blocking the transmission path of information virus among college students should proceed from the following three levels:

(1) Take the lead in occupying some nodes to reduce the number of transmission path of information virus. First, let some students take the lead in generating immunity to the information virus to prevent its spread, which requires the support of multiple rationality and ability, including strengthening the training of critical thinking, value, communication and technical rationality. These training on thoughts should be comprehensively, long-term and systematically incorporated into the school education system. Second, give full play to the educational advantages of students' professional fields and cultivate opinion leaders and their media literacy. In terms of fighting against information viruses in some professional fields, people with professional education in this field usually have stronger immunity. For example, in the dissemination of health information, college students majoring in biology and medicine usually have better judgment and can become the main force to prevent the spread of information viruses. At the same time, properly cultivate new media opinion leaders in various professional fields and pay attention to cultivating their media literacy and rational thinking. It is also necessary to "isolate" those super nodes that are adversely affected by the spread of information viruses. Third, enhance the discourse and communication power of the we-media platforms at various schools of universities and universities themselves. By giving full play to the we-media platforms of schools, institutions and organizations, they will be well integrated into the public communication system. By strengthening the professional training of operators some information viruses may well be inhibited or even eliminated via the production of professional content.

(2) Using group collaboration to identify and block information viruses. Although group interaction sometimes leads to group loss, in some situations, group synergy will also form group strength and generate group wisdom which play a role in the identification of some types of information viruses (such as rumors, false news, etc.). In the process of verifying a fact or information, if the goal is not too complex and the participants are diverse enough, group wisdom often works. Through the guidance of the platform, establish a certain group collaboration mechanism to encourage users' participation in information virus identification, which will not only enable the quick identification of some information viruses, but also enable users to improve their media literacy through first-hand participation. The information virus formed in group interaction also needs to find solutions in group interaction itself.

(3) Use platform mechanism and technology to help curb community transmission. Make full use of various software systems including algorithms to identify the content, especially some types of bad information. Machines can quickly find the source and transmission path of information and can also quickly identify some information viruses through semantic analysis and pattern recognition. The progress of technology in the future is also expected to play a role in identifying and preventing more types of information viruses. On the basis of machine filtering, the editors of school and university we-media platforms can make further professional judgment on the content and adjust the direction and flow of the content via the corresponding mechanism, so as to optimize the information environment of the platform.

This adjustment mechanism is also inseparable from the algorithm. In the content distribution algorithm, the platform needs to give more weight to those authentic and accurate contents with more public value, so that these contents can reach a wider group of college students. In this way, they can use these contents as a reference to identify information viruses. This also helps to increase the professional "concentration" of content on these social platforms. The long-term immersion of high-quality content may well improve college students' ability to appreciate the content and gradually produce the effect of good money driving out bad money on the social platform.

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