

Research on Media Literacy Education for College Students in the New Era

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Abstract: With the development of economic globalization, mobile network and media technology are developing rapidly. Media information is manufactured and disseminated at any time, and people can understand global information more conveniently with the help of media. At the same time, false, violent, pornography, and other negative information are also spreading rapidly in various media, and college students in the new era are in urgent need to improve their media literacy. This study explores the current situation of college students' media literacy level, and explores the improvement path from the three levels of college students, universities, and the government, with the hope to provide ideas for the media literacy of college students in the new era.

Keywords: New era; College student; Media literacy education

Online publication: November 23, 2023

1. Introduction

With the development of economic globalization, information globalization has become one of the most prominent features of modern society. New media represented by mobile phones and the Internet are invading people's daily life at an unimaginable speed, and are gradually becoming an important tool for daily communication. The Internet Society of China released the "China Internet Development Report (2023)" at the China Internet Conference on July 18, 2023. According to the report, by the end of 2022, the scale of Chinese Internet users was 1.067 billion, among which the scale of mobile Internet users reached 1.065 billion, comprising 99.8% of the users. It can be said that the mass media environment in the 21st century is no longer the traditional media environment from top to bottom, but a participatory interactive media environment spawned by the popularity of the Internet and the rapid development of the mobile Internet.

The development of media technology not only subverts the linear transmission of media information, but also blurs the boundary between the communicators, information, and the recipients, and everyone is an information producer. With the help of media, people can more easily understand the world, and establish various social relations through interaction with the media. Ordinary people begin to use the Internet to speak

their own voice, master a certain voice, and have an impact on government agencies. On the other hand, in the new media environment of fragmentation, decentralized, and strong interaction, a series of negative effects are common: distorted media information, rapid dissemination of media such as Moments, key opinion leader, micro-V users, numerous public opinion incidents in unexpected media, the public being addicted to entertainment information, etc., these phenomena reflect the confusion of the Chinese people in various media. With the development of media among college students, they are assertive, and have self-pursuit, willingness to engage in new things, and strong curiosity. In addition, college is the important stage for them to realize their self-worth, the outlook on life, and world outlook. If college students cannot handle the relationship with the media well, and cannot become an effective information “filter” in the complicated media environment where true and false are mixed, in the long run, it will bring serious consequences to the growth of college students. This study explores the media literacy level of college students in Jilin Province.

2. Connotation definition of college students’ media literacy

Regarding the concept of media literacy, its initial study is based on avoiding the negative effects of the media environment and preventing the hindering effects on the growth of youth. In the book of *Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness* by FR Leavis and Denys Thompson in 1933: first of all, the concept of media literacy education was proposed and defined, whose purpose is to target the values brought by mass media (newspapers, advertisements, popular novels, etc.) through “media literacy” education ^[1]. In 1992, the Media Literacy Research Center in the United States defined media literacy: media literacy refers to the ability of information selection, questioning ability, understanding ability, evaluation ability, creative and production ability, and speculative response ability of the audience in the face of all kinds of media information, which is also a relatively recognized understanding in the academic circle. From Ontario Ministry of Education: the purpose of media literacy is to cultivate students’ cognition and judgment on the nature of media, the skills and means commonly used by media, and the effects of these skills and means. Bu believes that he has the ability to use the media correctly and effectively, namely literacy, such as having the ability to read and write ^[2]. Zhang thinks that media literacy is a kind of ability and knowledge model, it is a knowledge structure gradually established through certain education methods and life to obtain media information, information meaning, and independent judgment of information value, it is also to cultivate the ability to select and understand complex media information, questioning, evaluating, expressing, thinking and adapting, and the ability to create and produce media information ^[3]. According to Lu, a person’s media literacy includes media critical ability, media knowledge ability, media application ability, and media creation ability. Yu believes that media literacy refers to how to effectively select, use, and identify some basic knowledge, skills, and qualities of media ^[4].

Through the definition of “media literacy” by Chinese and foreign scholars, it is found that although complicated, media literacy is a part of people’s comprehensive literacy, which directly points to the ability and quality structure, and knowledge level of media. Although media literacy is only one aspect of people’s basic literacy, it does not mean that the content of this “certain aspect” is single, on the contrary, it is a synthesis of various “media” abilities. The concept definition of media literacy in this paper is more inclined to the definition of ability mode, which refers to the ability of college students to be good at using the media, obtain, analyze, and create media information, to support their own production, life, and development, establish contact with the society, and safeguard their own rights and interests.

3. Current status of media literacy level among college students

Referring to relevant studies, the author compiled the “Questionnaire on Media Literacy of College Students,” and carried out investigation and research with college students in Jilin Province as the research object. The questionnaire included 35 questions, including seven secondary dimensions of demand, operation, understanding, judgment, feedback, production, and sharing. The questionnaire was evaluated using a five-point grading method, between 1 and 5. In order to properly evaluate the level of media literacy of college students, the score is divided into five grades: 1–1.5 is very poor, 1.5–2.5 is poor, 2.5–3.5 is general, 3.5–4.5 is better, and > 4.5 is very good. Higher scores indicate that the level of media literacy of college students is better, lower scores indicate that the level of media literacy of college students is worse and needs to be improved. 280 college students were randomly selected to answer the questionnaires, and 278 questionnaires were collected, among which 261 were valid questionnaires, with an effective rate of 93.2%.

In order to have an understanding of the overall level of media literacy among college students, this paper conducts a descriptive statistical analysis on the seven dimensions of demand, operation, understanding, judgment, feedback, production, and sharing, and their overall level. It was found that the overall level of media literacy of college students ($M = 3.8391$) was generally high, and the seven dimensional levels of college students were generally high, including understanding ($M = 4.2152$), higher than the production ($M = 4.1797$), demand ($M = 3.9228$), judgment ($M = 3.8114$), feedback ($M = 3.6556$), operation ($M = 3.5937$), and sharing ($M = 3.4951$).

3.1. Lack of media retrieval ability and the awareness of actively acquiring knowledge

College students have a good demand for media in daily life, and because of the demand for media information, they have the ability to use media tools daily, that is, “operation” ability. Most of the college students can independently install software and rationally use media daily in colleges and universities. However, due to the lack of appropriate media literacy education, most students view new media as an entertainment tool to relax and enjoy, play games, watch movies, social networks, and online shopping become the most common online activities, instead of just for learning. Additionally, the professional retrieval level of college students is generally low. Most college students choose simple retrieval for the needs of learning tasks. They are not good at literature database retrieval system and do not use it often. Some students even express that they have never used a literature database retrieval system.

3.2. Poor awareness of media judgment and feedback and lack of critical thinking

Since the emergence and development of media such as the Internet, big data and mobile Internet have made everyone surrounded by information. Various software are pushing information to users, and television programs are also constantly changing its content to attract users. Everyone can become an information disseminator, leading to the exponential growth of information, more and more people are dependent on new media and are afraid of missing some important information. However, since the development of the media has lowered the threshold of the information production and no longer controls it, the large amount of information obtained by the audience is of mixed quality. College students, as the mainstream group of media information, receive a lot of information every day, which includes some false, violent, extreme, pornography, and other negative information. In the survey, it is found that many college students cannot timely and effectively judge the authenticity of the information for these positive and negative information, and become the “relay” in the process of false and extreme information dissemination, producing negative social impact, and affecting their own study, life, and even values.

3.3. Lack of public order, laws, and regulations in media information

In creating and sharing media information, college students tend to use the text, pictures, audio, and video media to diversify and scientifically express and elaborate information. Some students will fully consider various factors, but it can be found from the media related legal knowledge score in the survey of college students that some students lack public order, laws, and regulations in media information, leading to some college students sometimes being in bad situations such as online violence, and they mistakenly play a part in creating and spreading false information. College students evaluate a range of information sources and flexibly seek ways to explore a variety of information capabilities as new understandings develop. However, college students do not believe that they are capable or necessary to serve as such “media information creators” and they are unwilling to spend too much time creating new and meaningful media messages ^[5].

4. Methods to improve the media literacy of college students

In the new era, communication technology has advanced by leaps and bounds, and various media applications have emerged in an endless stream. Massive amount of information is presented to people through the Internet. News and information, leisure and entertainment, shopping and consumption, web celebrity live broadcast, and other information make people’s life more convenient and interesting. However, in the complex network environment, college students often lack correct ideological guidance and scientific thinking skills in the face of various positive and negative information, and they are easy to indulge in it and lose themselves. Therefore, how to screen useful information, establish the correct value orientation, create and spread positive energy information, and improve their own media literacy, are particularly important in the new era ^[6].

4.1. Strengthening college students’ awareness of media literacy and improving their own media literacy level

In the media literacy education of college students, the motivation of college students themselves should be fully valued. Schools should focus on strengthening college students’ media literacy introspection consciousness, realize media information moral self-discipline, carry out media information environment self-discipline, at the same time form critical thinking, rationally face sensitive information on the Internet, take initiative to learn, choose content that is positive and in line with the mainstream cultural value orientation of society, and emphasize the role of campus friends to create an upward symbiotic environment. College students should set up the concept of learning subject, establish the goals of self-learning according to the specific situation of their own media literacy, and make a reasonable plan to ensure the smooth implementation of the goals. College students should also actively cooperate with the school media education, actively adapt to the educational situation, and actively assume the corresponding situational role, to ensure a good effect of media education. Moreover, college students should determine the methods and approaches of self-learning according to the goals and contents of school education. Cultivating critical thinking can make college students more comprehensive and logical when looking at different information. Through self-calibration and systematic thinking, especially on popular events and policies, they will put more thought into it and become more rational to avoid blindly following the trend. From national-level affairs, such as citizen participation in social governance, to all aspects of life, such as school affairs discussion, college students should cultivate a sense of social responsibility through media participation during the school. In the future, they can pay more attention to the development of the society and the country, with national and social development initiative.

4.2. Improving the curriculum system of media literacy education in colleges and

universities and giving full play to the role of school education

One of the most effective and scientific ways to cultivate students' media literacy is to carry out media literacy education in schools, and to give full play to the leading role of schools in media literacy education. Through the relevant courses offered by the school, more students can understand the importance of media through classroom teaching and student participation, master the media literacy knowledge, and further improve their media literacy ability. For different schools, media literacy education can be carried out according to their own conditions, such as adding media literacy into journalism and communication, college English education, and information technology education, or integrating media literacy into the teaching of ideological and political theory courses, or developing a separate ideological and political elective course for teaching. In the actual education teaching process, any course teaching can use college media, media, and the media environment, therefore, colleges and universities should give full play to the role of each course, enhance the professional training of media literacy of teachers, incorporate media literacy education into course education, and create implicit media literacy education space for college students. At the same time, colleges and universities can carry out various club activities and media-related activities, which can provide a better environment for the cultivation of media literacy in colleges and universities.

4.3. Government-society cooperation in creating a good media environment and performing media supervision

As the leader of media information standards, the government should timely issue and establish sound Internet-related policies and regulations, strengthen the Internet management chain, expand publicity, form a restraint mechanism with administrative intervention, and effectively control media communication. A green environment for information dissemination and a safe learning atmosphere should be created for college students. The government should take the initiative to shoulder the function of public utility organization, and lay the educational function of media literacy by holding various online media literacy activities. Education administrative departments should strengthen the implementation of media literacy education to ensure the implementation of media literacy education. The government and society should strengthen the supervision of the media industry and control the production of false, violent, and other negative information from the root ^[7].

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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