

Analysis of the influence of online political information on the political socialization of youth

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Abstract: The development of internet technology has made the dissemination of information more convenient, and the political socialization of young people is inevitably influenced by the development of internet technology. Online political information has both positive and negative impacts on the political socialization of young people. Enhancing the positive effects of online political information on the political socialization of young people and eliminating negative impacts are beneficial to the growth and development of young people.

Keywords: Youth; Online Political Information; Political Socialization

1. Introduction

The political socialization of young people refers to the process by which the political system disseminates the dominant political consciousness among adolescents through various channels. This leads them to gradually accept the existing political system and the political information and norms it affirms and implements, forming political emotions, beliefs, and a specific political consciousness and personality, and actively participating in social and political activities. With the increasing development of internet information technology, young people, characterized by their active thinking, distinctive personality, vitality, and willingness to engage with diverse new ideas, have become the primary audience for online information. In their process of political socialization, they are inevitably subject to the dual impact of online political information. Enhancing the positive effects and exploring pathways from various perspectives to eliminate the negative impacts are of profound significance to the growth and success of young people.

2. Analysis of the impact of online political information

The internet, as a mass media, leverages its unique advantages to extensively and intensely influence today's society, affecting people's thoughts and behaviors. It has become a vital medium for political socialization, with the political information it disseminates being increasingly accepted by more and more young people. At the same time, the virtual nature of the internet complicates the political socialization of young people. The internet has brought an explosion of information, leaving netizens, especially young netizens, feeling overwhelmed and directionless amidst the surge. The lack of political practice on the internet causes young people to receive and judge political information too idealistically. The political socialization of young people is a long-term and dynamic process. Currently, a relatively stable online political culture has not yet taken shape, and various online political cultures are in contention, causing online political information to have both positive and negative impacts on the political socialization of young people with its inherent characteristics. Online political information has the following characteristics:

2.1. Online political information is abundant

Internet technology has led to an explosion of information, with online political information coming from various sources. At the same time, online political information is always presented to young people in different forms. As the primary audience for online information, young people gain a vast amount of political information through the internet. In the process of receiving online political information, it is easy

for young people to find political norms and information that align with their own development. They achieve their political socialization by internalizing this information into their personal qualities and externalizing it into their actions.

2.2. Online political information is timely

The internet serves as a carrier for immediate dissemination, delivering a vast amount of information to the audience at the fastest speed possible. Not only is the speed of dissemination rapid, but the rate of updates is also swift. As a group with active thoughts, young people are eager to embrace the latest knowledge and information, allowing them to continuously renew their perspectives and progress with the times, keeping them at the forefront of the era and attuned to the dynamics of societal development. Timely delivery of online political information to young people enables them to quickly acquire the most up-to-date political knowledge, thereby broadening their political horizons.

2.3. Online political information is diverse and complex

The internet is saturated with a plethora of political information, presenting a challenge for young people who may lack the ability to discern. The multitude of information on the internet is stacked with varying political inclinations and includes many non-objective political viewpoints. Due to their immature thinking and limited social practice skills, young people are susceptible to being swayed by negative political information online. Unbiased political information can impact the judgment of young people. This is also the reason why online political information can have a negative impact on the political socialization of young people.

2.4. Online political information is virtual

The sources of online political information are diverse, which not only gives them a virtual nature but also makes the information itself virtual. This virtual aspect of online political information lacks verification of its accuracy. When young people receive this politically virtual information, their weaker ability to discern can lead them into a fictitious political world, which is not conducive to the formation and development of their political socialization.

3. The impact of online political information on the political socialization of youth

In the process of political socialization of youth, the internet provides us with a new channel for political socialization. Online political information plays a significant role in the formation and development of the political socialization of youth; it has both positive and negative impacts on their political socialization.

3.1. The double-edged sword effect of online political information

3.1.1. Online political information and the expansion of youth political horizons

The political knowledge disseminated through online political information broadens the political horizons of young people. Political knowledge is the foundation of political socialization; modern youth must learn some basic political knowledge to adapt to modern political life. The transmission of online information combines the advantages of many traditional media, breaking the boundaries of time and space, providing young people with the opportunity to access political knowledge from around the world. By comparing different political knowledge, young people form their own attitudes and behaviors based on their own judgment and analysis. In the process of receiving online political information, on the one hand, it is a process of improving the technical level of young people; to understand a large amount of rich online political information, young people must master certain network technologies. On the other hand, online political information breaks through regions and time and space, disseminating political information from all over the world, broadening the political horizons of young people. Positive and proactive political information can internally stimulate the political mission of young people, thereby enhancing political awareness and providing opportunities for the political socialization of young people.

3.1.2. Online political pressure and the tempering of adolescents' political will

The political pressure conveyed through online political information hones the political will of young people. Political pressure refers to the various interest groups exerting influence on different domestic and international groups in order to achieve their own political objectives. With the development of new media technology, the internet has become the primary arena for interest groups to apply political pressure. Political will is the determination to overcome difficulties and obstacles consciously in the process of participating in political life. The political pressure spread by online political information is the result of the gamesmanship among different interest groups, which inevitably includes the price each interest group pays to achieve its own interests. This requires young people to have political judgment, and to understand that political life is about overcoming numerous difficulties and obstacles to fulfill political intentions and achieve political socialization. By perceiving, alleviating, and eliminating political pressure, young people can cultivate their perseverance to overcome difficulties and remove obstacles.

3.1.3. Online political Ideals and the Strengthening of youth political convictions

The political ideals disseminated through online political information strengthen the political convictions of young people. Political ideals refer to the goals pursued by individuals in terms of national governance and their own careers, and the internet promotes these ideals through vivid examples. Political conviction is a sincere belief in a certain political ideal that comes from the heart. As our country is a socialist state, the political convictions of young people must be based on Marxist ideology and communist ideals. The political ideals of building communism spread through online political information have reinforced the political beliefs of the youth. Through the online promotion of the political positions, intentions, and measures of the Chinese Communist Party, young people recognize the crucial role of Marxist guiding principles for our country and can consciously strengthen their political convictions. By promoting political ideals, a broad base of young people can remain loyal to the party's cause, steadfastly adhering to their political beliefs.

3.2. The positive and negative effects of online political information

Internet technology is neutral, but the dissemination of online political information is not. Online political information can have both positive and negative impacts on the political socialization of young people.

3.2.1. Online political information weakens the political practice abilities of youth

The internet disseminates a vast array of political information among the youth, who filter, receive, and provide feedback on this information online, truly achieving the adage of "knowing all affairs of the world without leaving home." However, simply accessing online information does not truly enhance the ability to participate in politics in a meaningful way. For young people to achieve political socialization and gain political knowledge, they must engage in practice. As Mao Zedong once said, "If you want knowledge, you must participate in the practical transformation of reality. If you want to know the taste of a pear, you must change the pear and taste it yourself." Online political information is derived from others' practices and represents indirect experience; if the political knowledge of young people is based solely on the practices of others, it will lack their own judgment and subjectivity. Without practical experience, the political socialization of the youth may become trapped in a cycle of mental stereotypes and idealized political forms, which is not conducive to developing their political literacy and forming a political thinking pattern that is beneficial to their own development.

3.2.2. Online political information leads to youth's political choice confusion

Information overload has become a significant problem troubling people. American scholar John Naisbitt pointed out in his book "Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives": "Uncontrolled and disorganized information does not constitute a resource in an information society; on the contrary, it becomes an enemy of information workers." The increase in online political information merely offers more possibilities of choice, but it does not mean an increase in the youth's ability to select political information. On the contrary, it can exacerbate the confusion in political choices among the youth. The fast-food nature of the dissemination of online political information prevents young people from

reading the content of political information in its entirety, and even if they read quickly, they cannot make the correct judgments to select political information beneficial to their political socialization, leading to confusion in their political choices.

3.2.3. Online inequality and the political awareness gap among youth

The internet has become an indispensable tool in people's lives, creating a favorable environment for the political socialization of young people. However, due to a series of reasons such as unbalanced economic development, the growth of the internet has also shown imbalances. In areas where the economy develops more rapidly, political information is more widely disseminated and richer in content on the internet, leading to higher levels of political socialization among young people who are exposed to more information. In contrast, in remote areas where internet development is less advanced, young people have less access to online political information and fewer opportunities for political participation, resulting in a lower level of political awareness. This creates a significant difference compared to the political socialization of youth in developed areas.

3.2.4. Cyber impact on political beliefs

The internet is a double-edged sword, with cultural and political information from various countries colliding with each other. "The internet not only disseminates political information from our country but also brings the penetration of Western political values, beliefs, and ideologies, as well as behavioral orientations. To some extent, this impacts the political beliefs and behavioral orientations formed during the early stages of individual political socialization, causing psychological discomfort and behavioral obstacles." [3] Some hostile forces in the West will use online political information to spread values and norms that deviate from the mainstream culture advocated by the government; they attempt to replace socialist public ownership with capitalist private ownership, undermining college students' political beliefs and confidence in socialist construction. The spread of this kind of information is relatively covert, and young people have a weaker ability to filter such information, which emboldens the illegal actions of hostile elements, thereby weakening the effectiveness of youth political socialization and creating a vicious cycle.

4. Online political information and youth development regulation

4.1. Expansion of online political knowledge

Online political information disseminates a wealth of political knowledge, political culture, and political ideals, broadening the political horizons of young people and enriching their practical capabilities for political socialization. This encourages youth to continuously internalize and reflect on the political knowledge they have acquired, forming the driving force behind their political socialization. Therefore, enhancing the positive impact of online political information is beneficial for young people to achieve political socialization.

4.1.1. Seize online space and occupy cyberspace fortifications

Political education is the primary means of political socialization for young people in our country, and at the same time, internet technology has expanded the methods of political education. With the development of internet technology, political education has seized online space and occupied positions in cyberspace, and promoting the development of youth political socialization through online political information has become a trend. It is necessary to spread the mainstream social ideology and the core values of socialism via the network, increase the publicity efforts of political education, and guide the development of youth political socialization. The country should optimize the network management model to ensure that online political information can be quickly, rapidly, and efficiently conveyed to young people. At the same time, the country needs to vigorously develop the economy, improve the political system, and convey the correct online culture, creating a good political, economic, and cultural environment for the political socialization of youth.

4.1.2. Leveraging the advantages of school network education

Schools are vital places for adolescents to receive education. "Schools are institutions that impart cultural knowledge, labor skills, values, political views, and social norms to learners in a purposeful, planned, and organized manner, aiming to cultivate citizens who meet the requirements of a certain society, and are a special type of social organization." [4] Political socialization education through schools is more targeted for adolescents; schools can choose political information suitable for the development of young people based on their characteristics and carry out education accordingly. Network technology provides a means for schools to convey political information; schools can use new media technology to integrate political information into the lives of young people through online classrooms. With the development of platforms like Weibo and WeChat, adolescents are increasingly receptive to real-time information. Schools can use social media to create platforms for political and cultural communication, disseminate mainstream political culture, and help young people develop a scientific political consciousness.

4.1.3. Emphasizing the impact of family on youth political socialization

The family has a significant influence on the growth of adolescents. The level of attention to politics and understanding of political information in a family greatly affects the political socialization of young people. When a family pays attention to political information and possesses good political literacy, the degree of political socialization in adolescents tends to be higher. The influence of the family on adolescents cannot be overlooked. Modern ideological and political education should guide family education in the internet era by offering online and offline parental education courses to disseminate family education theories and methods and share practical experiences. This approach encourages more families to focus on the issue of youth political socialization, thereby better fulfilling the role of the first classroom in youth political socialization. In this way, adolescents can gain an advantage in the early stages of their personal political socialization, ensuring a strong starting point.

4.2. Internet surveillance and political cultivation of youth

4.2.1. Enhancing national oversight of internet content

Online political information can, on the one hand, contribute to the development of youth's political socialization, but on the other hand, harmful information on the network erodes the thoughts of college students. There is an urgent need to strengthen the monitoring of online information. The state needs to enhance top-level design, formulate internet policies, ensure the healthy development of the internet, and create a "cyberspace environment" conducive to the socialization of youth. The state should establish mechanisms for the admission of online political information, sort out such information from the source, formulate comprehensive rules to regulate online behavior, strictly review online political information, and intensify the guidance and supervision of the network. The state should increase investment in network technology, develop new software for monitoring internet information, and filter information tools. New regulatory authorities should be established to phase-monitor the effects of youth's political socialization.

4.2.2. Enhancing the practical training for youth's political socialization

Youth should acquire political knowledge and broaden their political perspectives, with the ultimate aim of applying their learning to political practice and developing political thinking through such practice. Families should provide opportunities for youth to engage in political experiences, conveying political life to young people through the family members' participation in political activities, allowing them to be influenced and participate in political life. Schools should create a micro-environment for youth political practice, utilize the role of school clubs, and carry out activities such as mock elections and mock trials, enabling youth to receive extensive political training. While strengthening political training for youth, the cultivation of political thinking is also achieved, mainly by developing political construction thinking, molding flexible thinking, and exercising rational thinking. The negative impacts in online political information should be mitigated by allowing youth to explore through practice, form their own political thinking, which in turn guides their political practice.

4.2.3. Political infusion in the internet era

Indoctrination is a basic principle of ideological and political education and is also one of the ways of political socialization. In the digital age, indoctrination is also necessary, but it must be purposeful, planned,

and targeted. To adapt to the needs of the era, political socialization should meet the needs of the youth, capture their attention according to their interests, and implement the indoctrination objectives specifically. Subsequently, actively explore methods of indoctrination within cyberspace, instilling correct national policies and values into young people through the internet.

4.2.4. *Regional development and political socialization*

The primary cause of the disparities in youth political socialization is the substantial variation in regional economic development. The unevenness in economic growth leads to a significant difference in the levels of political socialization among adolescents in developed and underdeveloped areas. Enhancing support for underdeveloped regions can effectively narrow these differences. Increasing economic assistance to these areas fosters a conducive economic climate for youth political socialization. Granting policy favors to underdeveloped areas, through the redistribution of tax policies and income regulation, can lead to a rational distribution and mitigate the wealth gap. In this way, we can diminish the gap in the growth of young people and the digital divide, thereby advancing the development of youth political socialization.

5. Conclusion

The paper delves into the extensive effects of cyber-political information on the political socialization of adolescents, examining both its positive and negative influences. Advances in internet technology have significantly eased the spread of information, positioning teenagers as the primary audience for online content, thereby exerting a profound impact during the political socialization process. The benefits include an expansion of political perspectives, the fortification of political resolve, and the consolidation of political convictions; whereas the downsides are seen in the reduction of political practice skills, the inducement of indecision in political choices, the exacerbation of personal disparities, and the dilution of political socialization outcomes. The essay underscores the necessity of amplifying the positive aspects of cyber-political information while mitigating its adverse effects through coordinated efforts in education, family influence, and national policies. Concrete steps entail dominating the virtual space, harnessing the educational advantages of school networks, accentuating the familial impact, bolstering surveillance of internet information, heightening practical exercises, and managing the disparities in adolescents' political socialization.

In essence, the cyber-political information wields a double-edged sword concerning the political socialization of youth. With prudent guidance and stringent regulation, its beneficial effects can be optimized while curbing the latent negative impacts, cultivating an affirmative and wholesome online sphere for teenagers and fostering their all-round development regarding political socialization.

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