

The Reality and Practical Pathways of Enhancing College Students' Internet Literacy

Yangjieya Liu^{1,*}

¹School of Geosciences and Technology, Southwest Petroleum University, Chengdu, China

*Corresponding Author: Ethel Tennyson

Abstract: In the Internet era, internet literacy is not only a new mission endowed to college students by contemporary social development but also fulfills the inherent needs for personal growth and progress. The cultivation and enhancement of college students' internet literacy in the new era is not only linked to the construction of network power and the effectiveness of the fundamental task of running schools with moral education; it is also a necessary path to promoting students' comprehensive development. However, there are still some deficiencies in the internet literacy of college students at present, which need to be addressed and improved urgently. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct research on the practical difficulties and optimization paths for enhancing college students' internet literacy, guiding them to become practitioners, promoters, pioneers, and defenders of a clear network space.

Keywords: College Students; internet Literacy; cyberspace.

1. Introduction

The internet profoundly affects people's lives and production, as it is constantly intertwined with their daily routines. Given this background, possessing good internet literacy is crucial. Today's college students are the main force in future national construction, and their internet literacy is linked to the implementation of China's network power strategy. As "natives" of the digital age, they study, work, and live through the Internet, enjoying its conveniences while also suffering from its adverse effects. Therefore, enhancing college students' internet literacy in the digital age helps to propel China's progress from being a significant "network user" to a leading "network power."

2. The Meaning of Internet Literacy

In 1994, American scholar McCullough first mentioned the term "internet literacy." He believed that internet literacy encompasses two aspects: knowledge and skills, specifically, how to correctly judge and use network knowledge, and how to effectively employ a variety of network skills. In 2000, American Art Silverblatt provided a deeper reflection on the connotation of internet literacy, pointing out that it is an ability that includes seven components, such as the ability to independently decide on network consumption, understanding the principles of network communication, recognizing the impact of the network on society and individuals, and being able to analyze and discuss network information strategies. Although the concept of "internet literacy" originated in the West, it evolves with society and time, and many Chinese scholars have also begun to study the concept, goals, and practical experiences of internet literacy. Their research provides strong theoretical support for the vigorous development of China's internet literacy education and the construction of network power.

So far, although the academic community has not provided a unified definition of internet literacy, most scholars agree that it is not merely the ability to operate network equipment. Instead, it should encompass multiple dimensions such as

network security, emotional attitudes, and behavioral management. In this study, internet literacy refers to the consciousness and ability required for people to coexist harmoniously and healthily with the network world. This definition aligns with the internet literacy standard evaluation system released at the 2017 Capital internet Literacy Symposium, which includes ten evaluation standards, such as understanding the network, safely interacting with the network, and utilizing it effectively.

3. The Reality of College Students' Internet Literacy

3.1. Weak ability to discern network information and sources

With the rapid development of the Internet, the amount of network information has grown explosively, and distinguishing between true and false information has become increasingly difficult. However, many college students often lack strong discernment when confronted with a large amount of information. They tend to trust unfamiliar information and sources readily and are easily misled by false information. When choosing information, some college students only focus on the content, ignoring the source, and failing to understand the reputation and authority of the publisher. They rely solely on the content to receive and disseminate information. Additionally, some college students lack critical thinking when faced with network information and are easily deceived by superficial content. They may not think deeply about the authenticity and value of the information, nor analyze and compare it in depth, leading them to make wrong decisions and behaviors easily. Taking the frequent occurrence of college students falling victim to online fraud as an example, influenced by consumerism and domestic economic development, college students generally exhibit advanced consumption behavior. When very tempting offers such as cash withdrawals and rebates appear online, they become lost in the complex network world based on their own material or emotional needs. Some college students lack internet literacy, which weakens their ability to discern

information and sources, ultimately making them susceptible to false news.

3.2. Weak ability to create network information

In the Internet era, social media and the network have undoubtedly provided college students with more space, a broader stage, and a variety of communication channels to express their views and ideas. However, there are still some college students who have not effectively utilized these precious resources to fully showcase their independent thinking and unique insights on various issues. They have not fully applied the knowledge acquired during their schooling to this vast online world, where they could potentially play the role of "opinion leaders," guiding and correcting irrational public opinion, offering speech guidance, actively supervising and reporting various chaotic phenomena on the network, maintaining a clear network environment and atmosphere, and contributing to the construction of a healthy and civilized online space. More often, they do not use the Internet to create effective information; instead, they merely act as onlookers. Sometimes, they are misled by negative information and blindly follow trends, participating in online speculation, malicious attacks, and other inappropriate behaviors.

3.3. Insufficient network security awareness

The network environment is very complex and diverse, and the connection between the network and real society is continuously strengthened. The mutual influence between the two is also continuously increasing. Attention should also be paid to individuals' network security, and their awareness of network security needs to be improved. This personal security awareness in the network can be divided into three aspects: the first is personal property security, the second is personal privacy security, and the third is personal psychological security.

In terms of personal property security, some college students lack a strong awareness of network security to protect their own accounts and passwords, leading to arbitrary disclosure. Sometimes, they easily believe in links and advertisements from unknown sources, causing personal property losses. In terms of personal privacy security, some college students inadvertently disclose personal information, contact details, addresses, and other important information online, greatly increasing the risk of being exploited by those with ulterior motives. In terms of personal psychological security, some college students may actively or passively participate in discussions and incidents of online violence, thus falling into the trouble of online violence and having a negative impact on their physical and mental health.

3.4. Weak network morality and legal literacy

The morality and legal literacy in the network, to some extent, are an extension of the morality and law in reality. However, it has incorporated many unique aspects and rules within the online sphere, making it challenging to skillfully navigate the network and reasonably utilize network resources. It is necessary to accurately delineate the boundaries of certain behaviors. For example, filming in a cinema and then posting it online actually falls into the category of "piracy" infringement. From both legal and moral perspectives, spreading such content is wrong, yet many

college students do not understand the information they disseminate online and fail to verify its authenticity before sharing. Furthermore, some college students lack clarity regarding the definition and handling of their own network rights infringements, which are among the numerous drawbacks and deficiencies observed in college students' online activities. Consequently, these behaviors may hinder college students from fully leveraging their advantages for effective dissemination online and may even set a negative example for others.

3.5. Weak network self-management ability

With the increasingly diverse forms of college students' interaction with the internet, the bond between them and the online world is also growing stronger. Various social media platforms have become tools for college students to express themselves, acquire information, and entertain, resulting in more and more of their real-life time being occupied by the internet. Some students exhibit signs of "internet addiction," displaying excessive dependence on the network, considering it an indispensable part of their lives. They frequently spend long hours online, indulging in the virtual world, and may even prioritize it over studying, socializing, and sleeping. When attempting to reduce or cease internet usage, they may experience withdrawal symptoms such as anxiety, irritability, insomnia, and loss of appetite, which may compel them to continue surfing the internet to alleviate their discomfort. Once the "internet addiction" phenomenon takes hold, college students' anxiety levels may rise, and their motivation to adjust their behavior may decrease, leading to a decline in their ability to self-regulate their internet use and the potential onset of psychological disorders.

4. Practical Pathways to Enhance College Students' Internet Literacy

4.1. Social Management Level

To enhance the internet literacy of college students, it is necessary to establish and refine a comprehensive system for fostering internet literacy, which necessitates the collaboration of the entire society. Firstly, relevant policies should be formulated and enhanced, encompassing the construction and upgrading of hardware and software facilities for network education in colleges and universities, along with the planning and development of related professions and educational materials. Secondly, media platforms and media behavior must be supervised and controlled to promote self-discipline within the industry. Currently, the Internet is thriving, with various social media platforms emerging successively. However, the industry's lack of self-discipline has resulted in numerous chaotic situations, such as social platforms with ambiguous content review standards and inadequate review processes, which has negatively influenced many college students. The media should leverage its strengths, vigorously promote the content and importance of network literacy education, actively shoulder the responsibility of network literacy education, and disseminate healthy and inspiring public cultural products to attract young students. Lastly, the government should support the establishment of relevant organizations and institutions, set up online and offline offices in various locations, conduct surveys of local colleges and universities on a 3 to 4-year cycle, implement actions based on their assessed levels of network literacy, and deliver lectures on network literacy

across different regions.

4.2. University Cultivation Level

Schools are one of the institutions that can establish close contact with students. Therefore, to cultivate and enhance the internet literacy of college students, schools should take responsibility for their own domain and actively fulfill their educational role. Specifically, schools should integrate professional knowledge, moral education, and internet literacy education. Firstly, network literacy education should be incorporated into the general college curriculum by grade and discipline. Systematic teaching materials should be compiled to accompany the course, and specific course standards should be established. Secondly, schools should actively cultivate a group of teachers who are familiar with and proficient in network skills and internet literacy, and teach students through information-based operations and teaching methods, leading by example. Thirdly, schools should actively organize various themed online discussions and include participation in these discussions as part of certain credit evaluation standards to encourage students to actively engage and develop their internet literacy. Lastly, based on the existing psychological counseling institutions within the school, a network emotional psychological counseling hotline should be established to address students' related psychological issues and guide their emotions.

4.3. Family Education Level

Family education serves as the foundation for college student education, and the network literacy and cognition of family members during college life influence the level of college students' network literacy. Therefore, in terms of family education, parents should actively acquire basic network knowledge and engage in communication with their children. By exemplifying good behavior, they can become qualified network citizens and guide and standardize college students' use of the internet in a reasonable and healthy manner. This will help them learn how to identify and assess the authenticity and quality of network information. At the same time, colleges and universities should select and draw inspiration from those excellent and effective family network literacy education methods. They should also provide parents with more targeted guidance for college network literacy family education. Through this model of mutual assistance and joint effort, the negative impact of the network environment on young people can be mitigated, and the cognitive level and skill set of the entire college student group regarding the online world can be collectively enhanced.

4.4. Self-regulation Level

First, actively learn about network law and network morality, and continuously improve your own network literacy. By doing so, you can behave reasonably within certain moral and legal boundaries online, and serve as a "weathervane" and "compass" for others on the internet. Especially, you should possess good information discernment abilities and refrain from spreading information from unknown sources. In addition, when witnessing verbal violence or other behaviors that violate network law and

morality on online platforms, especially social media platforms, you should take the initiative to remind, stop, or report such behaviors to the platform and relevant institutions. Secondly, actively participate in positive topic discussions online, especially regarding important public events and hot topics related to the country and society. In the realm of online public opinion, you should leverage your professional knowledge and insights, express your views and opinions in a rational manner, actively shoulder the significant responsibility of network opinion leaders in the new era, publish meaningful and valuable opinions, guide the direction of online public opinion, and disseminate positive online energy. Finally, college students should focus on cultivating self-regulation abilities. Their participation in online activities and improvement of their network literacy should be based on reasonable time planning. Currently, due to the convenience of internet access, anyone can view and post information at any time and place. If the time spent online is excessive and continuous, it may lead to "internet addiction." Therefore, it is necessary to consciously control the frequency and duration of internet usage and correctly view the internet as a "double-edged sword."

Acknowledgements

Sichuan higher education institution course ideological and political benchmarking institute (Department).

References

- [1] Xinhua News Agency. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the "Overall Plan for the Construction of Digital China" [EB/OL]. (2023-02-27) [2023-12-10]. https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2023-02/27/content_5743484.htm.
- [2] China Internet Network Information Center. The 52nd "Statistical Report on the Development of the Internet in China" [EB/OL]. (2023-08-28) [2023-12-10]. <https://www.cnnic.net.cn/n4/2023/0828/c88-10829.html>.
- [3] Li Yonghua, Wang Chaojie. Thoughts on the Network Literacy Education of Adolescent Students [J]. Journal of Shenzhen University (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition), 2010, 27(03): 158-160+135.
- [4] Xinhua Net. The Network Literacy Standard Evaluation System was officially released [EB/OL]. (2017-12-09) [2023-12-10]. http://m.xinhuanet.com/bj/2017-12/09/c_1122085409.htm.
- [5] Feng Sha, Xiao Yixiao. An Exploration of the Pathways to Enhance the Media Literacy of Young Students in the Network Era [J]. School Party Building and Ideological Education, 2023, (14): 69-71. DOI: 10.19865/j.cnki.xxdj.2023.14.020
- [6] Yang Ke Ping, Shu Xianlin. An Exploration of the Pathways to Enhance College Students' Network Literacy [J]. Research on Ideological and Political Education, 2014, 30(06): 117-120.
- [7] Jiang Hongda. Research on the Current Situation and Countermeasures of College Students' Network Media Literacy [J]. Chinese Adult Education, 2007(19): 52-53.