

Research on Media Literacy of College Students under the Perspective of Post-truth: Logical Direction, Problem Care and Path Exploration

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Abstract: In the context of the Post-truth era, the Media literacy of college students can be observed in four key areas: Media cognition, Media emotion, Media awareness, and Media behavior. The results of the questionnaire survey indicate that college students' Media emotion and Media awareness are inadequate and that their media behavior requires immediate improvement. To address this situation, colleges and universities must develop curricula to enhance the media literacy of their students, establish a theoretical foundation for the acquisition, evaluation, and creation of media information, and facilitate the growth of a competent teaching team to support the education of college students in media literacy. Additionally, efforts should cultivate a positive media campus environment and provide diverse media practice activities for college students. It is of great significance for the guidance of public opinion and the construction of ideology within universities to improve the media literacy of college students through various measures.

Keywords: Post-truth; Media literacy; Colleges and Universities; College Students

1. Introduction

In November 2016, Britain's exit from the European Union and the US election made "Post-truth" the keyword. Donald Trump has become a representative figure of Post-truth, and although he frequently accuses the mainstream media of publishing "fake news" 70% of Trump's statements have been found to contain misinformation or misleading statements, as verified by the independent U.S.-based fact-checking organization PolitiFact^[1]. Following the election, Oxford Dictionaries selected Post-truth as the 2016 buzzword of the year. The term is defined as how emotions, personal beliefs, and convictions become more influential than objective facts in forming public opinion. One year later, in November, as the Jiang Ge case continued to generate controversy, China's Internet witnessed the advent of a Post-truth moment, in which emotional responses gradually supplanted objective facts as the focal point of public discourse.

College students are the main participants in the network society. As of June 2023, the number of Internet users in China reached 1.079 billion, with 14.5% of this figure comprising individuals aged 20-29, placing this age group fourth in terms of Internet usage^[2]. It can be argued that the phenomenon of Post-truth has an impact on all aspects of college students' lives. In light of the intricate Post-truth network environment, it has become imperative to enhance the media literacy and competencies of college students in a comprehensive manner. In light of the above, what are the key elements of media literacy among college students in the context of Post-truth? What are the shortcomings of college students' media literacy, and what part do colleges and universities play in enhancing it? This paper aims to address these questions.

2. The Logical Direction of College Students' Media Literacy Construction

Media literacy is not a single element or skill, rather, it is a multifaceted system structure. As a result, the development of media literacy must be understood as a continuous process of updating the components of this system in response to the changing times. The advent of network media with the

Internet as its core has brought about a transformation in media technology that has posed a challenge to human cognitive abilities and modes of thought. In light of this, there is a need to expand individual media literacy based on existing content to adapt to the discomfort brought about by the new media technology.

In this study, media literacy is defined as the capacity of individuals within society to recognize the characteristics and functions of the media, to interpret, critique, and disseminate media information rationally and constructively, and to utilize the media and its information to facilitate personal development and social progress, which is an essential aspect of the quality of citizenship. The specific contents are as follows.

(1) Media Cognition. Individuals can assess media content in a comprehensive, rational, and scientific manner by acquiring the requisite media knowledge. This necessitates that college students obtain a certain degree of media literacy, encompassing an understanding of the operational principles of media content, the production process, and commercial publicity strategies. Those with a higher level of media literacy can delve beneath the surface of information communication, gaining insight into the interests, cultural factors, and ideological tendencies that underpin it. This enables them to make more objective and fair value judgments.

(2) Media Emotion. The emotional and rational state of an individual when engaging with media information. The emotional impact of media messages is shaped by their emotional color and value orientation, which can evoke feelings of empathy, anger, sympathy, and other emotions in the audience. The examination of media emotion not only considers the individual's intuitive emotional response to the message but also the influence of such a response on the individual's moral judgment, value assessment, and even behavioral inclination. College students must learn to maintain critical thinking while empathizing with emotions and avoiding being manipulated by emotional messages.

(3) Media Awareness. The fundamental comprehension of the legal tenets governing media practice, the ethical standards governing network conduct, and the regulations governing participation. Media awareness is the capacity of college students to deliberately regulate their online conduct, proactively safeguard their privacy and that of others, and possess the ability to avert potential risks and threats to network security. Enhancing college students' media awareness is pivotal to fostering a healthy and harmonious network ecology.

(4) Media Behavior. The capacity of individuals to utilize media resources in an efficacious manner for personal development and social participation. This signifies that individuals are capable of acquiring knowledge and skills pertinent to research, life, and work through the medium of the media. Furthermore, they can engage in discourse about public issues, policy feedback, and other cyber-political activities through social media, online websites, and other digital platforms. The role of the media in society is to inform, educate and entertain. College students should be aware that they are both consumers and creatives of information and that they have the right to express their views on matters of social justice and the public interest.

Highly media-literate college students can skillfully use media tools, efficiently explore media resources, understand the mechanism of media information generation, critically evaluate media content, and on this basis can reasonably create information, disseminate information, and utilize information for public participation. The objective of media literacy education is to foster the development of informed and responsible citizens. Ideological and political education in colleges and universities should focus on disseminating knowledge about the propaganda methods and public relations skills employed by the media. This should help college students understand that the media world is a reflection of reality, albeit a selective and processed one. They should also recognize that there is a discrepancy between the unadulterated real world and the one presented by the media. It is therefore important for them to have a critical understanding of the media and the information constructed by it.

3. Problems of media literacy among university students

In a typical social setting, it can be posited that all individuals possess a certain degree of media literacy, albeit with considerable variation in levels of proficiency. Consequently, there are discernible differences in media literacy levels among various categories of individuals within a given group. To this end, there is a clear need for a method to assess the extent of media literacy within a given group. Questionnaire surveys represent a widely employed method in social research, offering a means to collect and analyze data with a high degree of realism.

3.1. Questionnaire design and retrieval

In order to guarantee the scientific rigor of the questionnaire design, this study draws on the Media and Information Literacy (MIL) assessment framework proposed by UNESCO and combines it with the Media literacy elements of this study to construct and design the questionnaire. As is shown in Table 1, the dimensions of the questionnaire are divided into three first-level dimensions of Access, Valuation, and Creation, and seven second-level dimensions of Competence, Operation, Understanding, Judgement, Feedback, Creativity, and Participation.

Table 1: Dimensions of college students' Media literacy in the Post-truth perspective

Level 1 dimension	Level 2 dimension	Dimension description	Corresponding conceptual elements
Access	Competence	The utilization of media for the fulfilment of learning and living requirements.	Media Behavior
	Operation	The ability to operate a range of hardware devices, including computers, mobile phones, and other media hardware devices, is essential.	
Valuation	Understanding	Have a basic knowledge of the media, interpret media messages in the context of that knowledge, and understand the impact of media messages based on that interpretation.	Media Cognition
	Judgement	It is imperative to evaluate the veracity of information and ascertain its alignment with objective reality. Furthermore, it is of paramount importance to deliberately refrain from any potential risks associated with the media.	Media Awareness
	Feedback	Perceptual and rational states presented to information	Media Emotion
Creation	Creativity	Using the media to innovate new information, media content, or knowledge.	Media Behavior
	Participation	Ability to use media platforms to follow and participate in government affairs, public events and activities such as voting ,and participating in surveys	

As shown in table 2, a total of 917 questionnaires were distributed in this survey. Following manual screening, questionnaires with an answer time of less than 60 seconds and questionnaires where the same option was selected were excluded. This resulted in a final sample of 821 questionnaires, representing a recovery rate of 89.5%. The distribution of the sample in terms of gender, region, education, and specialty is deemed to be reasonable, and the sample is considered to be representative.

Table 2: Basic information of the questionnaire sample

Personal Information	From	Quantities	Proportions
Gender	Male	375	45.7
	Female	446	54.3
Age	17~22	310	37.8
	23~25	425	51.8
	26 years and over	86	10.5
Learning stage	Junior College student	131	16
	undergraduate student	506	61.6
	Graduate students (including masters)	184	22.4
Major	Arts	395	48.1
	Science	306	37.3
	Engineering	120	14.6
Area of the school	Northeast	106	12.9
	North	126	15.3
	Central	151	18.4
	East	107	13
	South	102	12.4
	Southwest	124	15.1
	Northwest	105	12.8
Total		821	100

3.2. Major Problems of Media Literacy among College Students

A comprehensive analysis of the data indicates that the media literacy of college students is generally at a medium-high level, which is in line with the expectations of society, families, and schools. Nevertheless, several issues remain. Firstly, there is a relative lack of operational ability in the access dimension. Secondly, there is a need to strengthen media knowledge and judgment in the evaluation dimension. Thirdly, there is an urgent need to improve media participation in the production of media content in the creation dimension. Among these areas, there is considerable scope for enhancement, particularly in the creation of innovative media content and the active utilization of media platforms to engage with social and public affairs.

3.2.1. Media operating techniques need to be improved

The term Access is primarily defined as the ability to use media for daily life and study. It can be argued that students can only effectively engage with media in their daily lives by acquiring and mastering the necessary information and skills to utilize media resources. In general, the media literacy of college students in the dimension of access is high. The majority of students can use daily shopping software and learning websites for leisure and study purposes. The questionnaire also addressed the dimension of ability, with approximately 80% of students selecting either “completely independent” or “relatively independent” for questions 10 to 12.

Nevertheless, in comparison to their proficiency in media utilization, college students demonstrate a comparatively limited aptitude for media operations. In questions 13 to 15 of the questionnaire, 20.4%, 25.1% and 34.9% of the students indicated that they were unsure, unable to operate the media independently, and unable to do so at all, respectively. Approximately 30% of the students demonstrated an inability to utilize media tools independently in their daily lives and studies. While there may be differences in preferences about online games, and for some students games are not a necessary choice for leisure and relaxation, they also demonstrate shortcomings in the conversion of audio and video, as well as in the use of essential office software. It is therefore evident that there is a need for further improvement in the media operation skills of university students.

3.2.2. Inadequate media knowledge and judgment

The data pertaining to the Understanding dimension reveals that the majority of respondents selected “very much in line with” or “quite in line with” in questions 16 to 18 of the questionnaire. This suggests that college students are capable of integrating their prior social experiences with their comprehension of media messages. This suggests that college students have an emerging understanding of the veracity of media messages, the values embedded in media content, and the impact of media messages in the context of their existing social experiences. The 19-item scale assesses college students’ knowledge of industry guidelines for media organizations in releasing their messages. The primary objective was to assess the extent of college students’ familiarity with the fundamental tenets of media literacy. While the initial three questions indicated that college students can utilize their prior experience to develop a fundamental comprehension of media messages, question 19 demonstrated that their basic media literacy was not as robust as it should be. The 19 questions presented a series of options for respondents to choose from. The responses indicating uncertainty or incompatibility accounted for 27.4% of the total, indicating that nearly 30% of the students lacked an understanding of the fundamental media responsibilities and obligations. This indicates that college students are unable to identify instances of media behavior that contravene established norms and standards of conduct and lack the requisite understanding to advise media practitioners on how to conduct themselves in such a manner.

Secondly, in the domain of Judgment, the subject is prompted to indicate their intention to report instances of pornography, violence, and other forms of undesirable information disseminated on media platforms. The study primarily investigates whether college students are capable of consciously avoiding the potential moral hazards associated with media consumption. Of the respondents, 31% indicated that they were unsure, felt that the statement was only partially applicable, or that it did not apply to them at all. This suggests that approximately one-third of college students may be inclined to disregard the potential moral hazards associated with internet usage.

Although the questionnaire includes two questions on media knowledge and media judgment, which provide insight into certain aspects of college students’ behaviors in these two areas, the trend observed is nevertheless noteworthy. It is anticipated that future research will optimize and enhance the media knowledge reserve and media moral safety of college students.

3.2.3. Media Participation and Creativity are in dire need of enhancement

Following the acquisition and screening of information, college students will develop the motivation to Creativity new information in order to satisfy a greater number of self-needs. Concurrently, as the principal users of the Internet, college students should also be a significant focus of network governance and political participation. Accordingly, the final dimension of college students' media literacy is "creation" which encompasses two subordinate dimensions: The final two dimensions of college students' media literacy are "Creativity" and "Participation". In this context, the term Participation encompasses not only engagement in online leisure and entertainment activities, but also involvement in online public affairs. The questions in the participation dimension of the questionnaire are primarily focused on the latter.

The participation dimension comprises three questions (27–29), with 58.9%, 65.1%, and 74.4% of respondents indicating "not sure" "relatively infrequent" and "very infrequent" respectively. Question 27 pertains to the participation of college students in online leisure and entertainment activities, whereas questions 28 and 29 concern the frequency with which they engage in public affairs. The proportion of respondents who selected "very often" for the latter two questions was 8.9% and 6.0%, respectively. This indicates that less than one-tenth of college students frequently utilize the media for political participation, and approximately 70% of college students lack a clear desire to engage in online political participation, which represents a significant discrepancy that merits further investigation.

The Creativity dimension comprises four questions, ranging from 30 to 33. Among the respondents, 31.5% selected "not sure" 42.3% chose "relatively infrequent" 55.3% opted for "very infrequent" and 41.4% selected both options. In comparison to the other options, question 30 indicates that the majority of college students engage with online learning on a more regular basis. This suggests that colleges and universities are increasingly prioritizing the development and utilization of online resources. The responses to questions 31, 32 and 33 indicate that approximately half of the college students surveyed do not frequently use image and video editing software. Consequently, it is challenging for them to utilize media platforms to publish original content on a regular basis. In the process of creation, over 40% of college students adopt a more casual approach, failing to fully consider the intended audience for the content.

4. Exploring the Path of Ideological and Political Education in Colleges and Universities to Empower College Students' Media Literacy

4.1. Curriculum construction: Set up the basic course of media literacy

The implementation of media literacy courses at the post-secondary level represents a pivotal strategy for enhancing college students' media literacy rigorously and methodically. The incorporation of media literacy education into the comprehensive quality improvement of college students is a crucial step in ensuring that they can responsibly utilize media technology and resources. The mastery of media knowledge is a fundamental aspect of this process, as it directly influences the ability of college students to engage with media in a critical and informed manner. Currently, the curriculum for media literacy enhancement for college students in China remains confined to the communication science and journalism curriculum system. Consequently, higher education institutions may draw upon international best practices to develop media literacy courses that align with local circumstances and facilitate the consolidation of college students' media literacy competencies.

4.1.1. Develop a general education course

The concept of general education encompasses both an educational approach and a talent cultivation mode. Its objective is to foster the holistic development of individuals, equipping them with a broad perspective, comprehensive knowledge, an open-minded disposition, and refined emotional sensibilities, thereby promoting comprehensive growth and well-roundedness^[3]. In 1998, China's colleges and universities began to offer general education courses with the aim of fostering students' comprehension of the fundamental principles of other disciplines that are relevant to their majors, the cultivation of positive values, and the enhancement of students' comprehensive abilities. The general studies program entails transcending the confines of specialized disciplines, expanding students' intellectual horizons, and fostering a sense of cultural universality and scientific inquiry.

In the context of the digital age, enhancing college students' media literacy necessitates transcending the constraints of specialization. This will ensure that media literacy becomes a public literacy for all

college students. In foreign countries, the construction of media literacy general education programs varies according to the specific national conditions prevailing in each case. The following two modes may be identified as typical. One approach is to offer media literacy electives, as exemplified by the Beijing Institute of Technology, which has introduced media literacy electives for non-media students through the college students' catechism platform. Another is to offer media literacy education as a standalone course, as evidenced by Japan's higher journalism education, mass popularization education, and other general courses at the university level. The construction of media literacy general education courses at home and abroad provides a useful point of reference for China.

The construction of general education courses requires consideration of two key aspects. The initial consideration is the individual differences of students. Given the diversity of students' backgrounds, including family circumstances, geographical differences, and personality traits, the fundamental objective of media literacy is to provide instruction tailored to the individual and the material, ensuring that each student has the opportunity to achieve their full potential within their unique circumstances. Secondly, it places significant demands on the professional competence of teaching staff. As general education courses are open to students of different majors, teachers should have a comprehensive understanding of their respective disciplines, employ a balanced approach to teaching, ensure that the curriculum is both comprehensive and innovative, and present the subject matter logically and engagingly, in order to stimulate the curiosity of students of different majors.

4.1.2. Creating a professional program

In contrast to the general education curriculum, the professional curriculum emphasizes the teaching of specific, specialized knowledge and the development of students' vocational abilities. The requisite professional courses are those that professional students are obliged to undertake. It can be reasonably proposed that the incorporation of media literacy training within the professional curriculum would serve to enhance the efficacy of students' media literacy development.

In foreign countries, it is a common practice to incorporate media literacy requirements into professional courses, with two main approaches. One approach is to integrate media literacy education-related knowledge into a specific discipline and reflect it in the curriculum. To illustrate, in Japan, media literacy is incorporated into the fundamental information curriculum at the junior high school level, with the objective of fostering students' comprehension of the evolution of media and related subject matter. Secondly, media literacy is incorporated into other academic disciplines. To illustrate, in Europe, the Czech Republic mandates the utilization of online learning platforms for digital learning in the course designated as "Language Learning for Business and Economics", whereas, in Canada, media content is integrated into a portion of the English language curriculum.

In China, the incorporation of information-based learning into the curricula of journalism and communication, as well as English language subjects, has also become relatively common. To illustrate, the MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) and Super Star Learning APP have implemented a combined online and offline learning approach, which has involved the production of various materials, including posters, videos, and short videos, as well as other assignments. This approach has been designed to assess the richness of the teaching methods employed and to meet the diverse learning needs of students. College students who will soon face intense social competition, must comprehend the techniques of media content production and become acquainted with the tenets of media utilization. This will enable them to more actively engage in the generation and dissemination of information, enhance their own mediated survival, and bolster their social competitiveness. It would be beneficial to continue integrating media literacy requirements into the construction of professional disciplines, to foster students' enthusiasm and motivation in media learning.

4.2. Talent building: constructing a media literacy building team

Teachers play a key role in the advancement of college students' media literacy. The implementation of media literacy education, whether in the form of general courses, elective courses, or the cultivation of media literacy among teachers of other specialized courses, is contingent upon the availability of a sufficient number and quality of media literacy educators.

4.2.1. Strengthening the Media Literacy Faculty

Currently, media literacy education is not a standard offering in Chinese universities. Furthermore, the existing media literacy education for college students, which is primarily embedded in ideological and political education theory courses, is inadequate to meet the evolving demands of college students'

media literacy in the context of the Internet's rapid expansion. Furthermore, the creation of dedicated courses on media literacy and their integration into existing ideological and political education courses also presents the challenge of enhancing the media literacy of the teaching staff. Given the diversity of age and academic backgrounds among teachers in colleges and universities, there is considerable variation in their exposure to and use of media channels and purposes. The establishment of a cohort of professional media literacy educators is essential to facilitate the design of differentiated course frameworks and learning materials for educators at varying levels and in diverse contexts. Consequently, institutions of higher education may appoint select members of their faculty, drawn from those with expertise in journalism, media studies, or related administrative roles, to form a dedicated team responsible for the development and delivery of media literacy education. This approach can facilitate the integration of media literacy into the curriculum and enhance the media literacy skills of students from a range of academic disciplines. If a college or university lacks the requisite number of teachers, it may be advisable to consider recruiting personnel with the requisite political qualifications in the field of network and information technology, to provide a supplementary force on campus.

4.2.2. Promoting the development of teachers' competencies related to media literacy

Teachers in colleges and universities fulfill several roles, including that of the preacher and guide for students, receiver, and disseminator of information, and even opinion leader. In the context of the current media landscape, the media literacy of college teachers is closely linked to the quality of their lectures, the effectiveness of their teaching, and the construction of their students' ideologies. The current situation, in which students are observed to adopt a head-down posture in the classroom, engage in conflicts with teachers, and be subjected to bullying, is related to the media literacy of teachers. It is therefore urgent to improve the media literacy of college teachers in order to cultivate a new type of teaching team that can adapt to future changes in education.

The following points must be taken into account in order to enhance the media literacy of college teachers. The initial step is to develop a targeted curriculum and teaching content for media literacy learning. For those teachers who are more senior in age, the key objective is to enhance their ability to utilize new media. In contrast, for those who are relatively younger, the focus is on developing their awareness of media, as well as their understanding of network culture and their capacity for critical interpretation. The specific learning content can be divided into three categories. The first category concerns the critical understanding of media information and the rational dissemination and production of media information. The second category pertains to the enhancement of the ability to use media, including the utilization of a variety of media platforms for teacher-student exchanges, which serve both teaching and scientific research. The third category is concerned with the integration of media literacy education into professional characteristics, to exerting a positive influence on the media literacy of college students.

4.3. Cultural construction: creating a favorable atmosphere for media education

The vitality and diversity of college students make them an ideal audience for media literacy education. By providing engaging and varied learning activities, educators can foster interest and enthusiasm for media among this demographic. Firstly, the construction of official accounts on popular social media platforms, including WeChat, Weibo, and Jitterbug, has been reinforced. By leveraging the unique attributes of various media platforms and aligning them with prevalent trends and topics of student interest, or by organizing a range of interactive communication initiatives centered around major festivals, such as the Dance Relay Challenge, Media Knowledge Contest, Internet Subject Video Contest, Dance and Music Contest and Dance and Music Contest, media literacy education can be effectively enhanced. Such activities include the Internet Subject Video Contest and others. The objective is to stimulate students' awareness of media contact and desire to use media, thereby facilitating their acquisition of media knowledge, media skills, and other related media content through enjoyable activities.

Secondly, the implementation of an activity entitled Popular Journalists on campus is recommended. This would facilitate students' comprehension of the structural organization and news production process of specific media organizations, through the delivery of lectures on journalism and media. This would, in turn, enhance students' information sensitivity and information critique ability. Furthermore, establishing connections with media organizations offers students the chance to engage in media literacy education. One of the key objectives of media literacy is to facilitate the sustainable development of college students and enhance their capacity to contribute to society. To this end, media organizations may consider opening their doors on a regular basis to the general public, extending invitations to college students to visit and gain insight into the news production process. Colleges and universities can enter

into cooperation with media organizations to promote the convenience of media practice for college students. At the same time, the government can build media practice bases for students to promote the development of their media skills. For example, the government of Saitama Prefecture in Hatamoto has funded the construction of the SKIP CITY base, which serves to educate elementary and middle school students about media literacy, such as video production.

5. Conclusion

It can be argued that the concept of Post-truth, as a phenomenon with its roots in the Western political context, has been propelled from the periphery to the public consciousness with the support of internet technology. This has resulted in the development of Post-truth from an isolated and occasional individual incident into a pervasive and generalized phenomenon. The phenomenon of Post-truth. The media literacy of college students in the field of Post-truth can be defined as a dialectical unity of media cognition, media awareness, media emotion, and media behavior. In this context, the current media literacy of college students is inadequate to cope with the complex and changing Post-truth public opinion environment. This is evidenced by shortcomings in operational skills, knowledge reserves, information participation, and creation. It is of particular importance to examine this situation rationally and objectively and to establish a media literacy network that coordinates curriculum, talent, and culture from the core of higher education institutions.

However, the intrinsic complexity of cyberspace is such that it serves not only as a breeding ground for Post-truth but also as a crucible for the collision of emotions and values. Although the emotional aspect of the Post-truth phenomenon is identified as a negative factor in this study, it is necessary to consider whether the expression of emotion is truly a problematic phenomenon in the context of cyberspace. The utilization of voters' emotional tendencies to secure votes in Western political elections offers an alternative perspective: namely, that emotion can be regarded as a kind of social resource. Accordingly, the utilization of emotion in opinion guidance, the mobilization of emotion in cybernationalist movements, and the delineation of the boundaries of emotional usage will be addressed subsequently.

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