Research on the Guiding Path of Online Public Opinion in Universities from the Perspective of Public Management

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Abstract: *This paper starts from the perspective of public management and takes university online public opinion as the research object to explore how to effectively guide university online public opinion in the current complex international and domestic environment. Through conceptual analysis and problem analysis of online public opinion in universities, guidance paths are proposed, including strengthening policy and public opinion guidance, promoting communication of network public opinion guidance capabilities in different economic regions, improving guidance methods, and establishing regulatory mechanisms. The aim is to provide suggestions and references for the management and guidance of online public opinion in universities.*

Keywords: *Guidance on online public opinion in universities; Public administration; Research on the guiding path*

1. Introduction

On August 28, 2023, the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) released the 52nd "Statistical Report on the Development of China's Internet" in Beijing. The "Report" shows that as of June 2023, the number of Internet users in my country has reached 1.079 billion, an increase of 11.09 million from December 2022, and the Internet penetration rate has reached 76.4%[1]. With the increase in the number of netizens and the popularization of the Internet, online public opinion crises related to campus management, safety accidents, teacher ethics and professional conduct, exam enrollment, and other aspects have frequently occurred, causing widespread attention from university teachers and students as well as various sectors of society[2], becoming the focus of online discussions. This has also led to the emergence of online public opinion crises in universities, and even seriously affecting social harmony and stability. The government plays a key role in leading online public opinion, and online public opinion crisis is a product of inadequate government public management, closely related to the level of government public management, and universities are an important component of government public affairs management. The correct guidance of online public opinion in universities is an urgent need to create a good network ecosystem to safeguard the interests of the people; It is an urgent need to adhere to the main battlefield of the ideological struggle on the Internet; It is an urgent need to ensure the security of national ideology and political power. Universities need to guide campus network public opinion, create a good network ecology, and jointly maintain social harmony and stability under the guidance of the government.

2. Concept analysis

2.1 Online public opinion in universities

Public opinion refers to the political orientation and attitude of the public towards the object ruler, which arises and changes around the emergence, development, and changes of social matters within a certain social space. Online public opinion refers to the subjective, valuable, and influential opinions expressed on certain hot topics within the scope of the Internet. College online public opinion is a type of online public opinion that refers to comments or comprehensive viewpoints that arise in the college online space and have public, communicative, guiding, and influential characteristics[3]. Specifically, it refers to the special information disseminators - college student netizens, who express strong opinions, emotions, wishes, and attitudes through online interactive channels such as websites, instant messaging tools, Blog, personal spaces, news posts, etc.[4], around major hot topics, current political issues,

campus society, and school management that are closely related to the interests of college students. The guidance of online public opinion in universities refers to the process in which government departments or relevant institutions, such as education authorities and universities, use various means and strategies to guide and control the internal and external online public opinion of universities, in order to maintain their reputation, stability, and image, and promote the harmonious development of the campus.

2.2 From the perspective of public management

Public management refers to the effective management of a wide range of social affairs related to the realization of public interests by public organizations centered around the government through the integration of social resources[5] and the use of political, economic, administrative, legal, technological and other means. It refers to the scientific method of viewing problems and resolving problems from the perspective of the government, and efficiently providing high-quality public services through public participation on the basis of the rule of law. The perspective of public management emphasizes the interaction and participation between the government and the public, and emphasizes the coordination and balance of diverse interests. Similarly, it also emphasizes transparency and accountability to improve administrative efficiency and enhance public trust in the government. University affairs belong to the category of public affairs, and the crisis of university network public opinion is also the result of the absence of public management. Therefore, this article studies and analyzes the guiding path of university network public opinion from the perspective of public management, analyzes the formation, dissemination, and impact of university network public opinion from the perspective of the government, and uses the concepts and relevant measures of public management to correctly guide university network public opinion.

3. Problem analysis

3.1 Guidance of online public opinion in universities Currently, the international and domestic environment is complex

The internet is not only an important space for people's production and life, but also an important platform for the Party and government to serve the masses, understand public opinion, and govern society. The current international situation is constantly changing, and the social public opinion environment is becoming increasingly complex. Western countries led by the United States are constantly increasing their provocation towards China, attempting to use political, economic, military and other means to curb China's development. They also use information networks to undermine the credibility of the country, smear the national system, spread false rumors, and cause social panic in public opinion events, posing great challenges to the guidance of online public opinion in universities. Some hostile forces in Western countries have adopted more covert means of ideological infiltration into our country, such as introducing some international hot topics into universities, taking the opportunity to incite the emotions of teachers and students.

3.2 Low sensitivity of online public opinion in universities and economically underdeveloped areas

The guidance of online public opinion in universities shows significant regional differences. The number of universities in economically developed regions is more dense, and the amount of information dissemination is greater and faster, resulting in a more rapid and fierce development trend of online public opinion in universities. In order to reduce the impact of negative public opinion and maintain a good social image, local government departments and universities continuously improve their sensitivity to public opinion. In the governance of online public opinion in universities, they often can achieve rapid response, openness, transparency, and emphasis on guidance. In contrast, economically underdeveloped regions have a lower sensitivity to online public opinion in universities, and their universities and government departments have not invested enough time and energy in the supervision and governance of online public opinion. They have become aware of public opinion events and the handling process is also messy, which has become a major limitation for economically underdeveloped regions to guide online public opinion in universities in the information age. Taking the economically underdeveloped Jiangxi region and the economically developed Shanghai region as examples, through post analysis of the "Rat Head Duck Neck" case that occurred at Jiangxi Industrial Vocational and Technical College in June 2023, it was found that the school, as the main body involved, lacked the sensitivity to respond to online public opinion when the incident occurred, and did

not immediately fix relevant evidence or seek third-party professional institutions for investigation and appraisal. Instead, it destroyed objects in order to calm public opinion. The results were reported by the school itself, and it also led students to express their opinions together, but the government did not take it seriously. After the first announcement of the incident, it promoted the escalation of public opinion and further undermined the credibility of the school and government. As early as a few years ago, the Shanghai region had been able to handle university public opinion incidents with ease. From the "academic misconduct" incident at Shanghai Jiao Tong University in June 2019, it was learned that at the beginning of the public opinion incident, schools and government departments attached great importance to it. They immediately established an investigation team and publicly released the investigation results. At the same time, they also strengthened the prevention and crackdown on academic misconduct, establishing a good image of the rule of law, cleverly resolved negative public opinion. It can be seen that the sensitivity and guidance methods of online public opinion among universities in economically underdeveloped areas still need to be improved.

3.3 The government and the administrative departments of universities have not formed a comprehensive and unified management system

3.3.1 Simple and extensive education guidance methods for government and university online public opinion

The guidance of online public opinion in universities mainly relies on the ideological and political education of college students. Colleges and universities mainly carry out theoretical courses in ideological and political education, but ideological and political education courses generally emphasize theory and neglect practice, and students absorb and internalize less. Some teachers generally have insufficient understanding and theoretical foundation of online public opinion guidance work, and daily guidance concepts and control efforts are insufficient, resulting in poor effectiveness of online public opinion guidance in universities[6].

In addition, the government and universities usually adopt methods such as avoiding, blocking, and deleting posts to deal with hot news events or emergencies, in an attempt to dilute the handling of online public opinion in universities and avoid work troubles[7]. This conservative and passive approach prevents college students from expressing their emotions reasonably, which can exacerbate conflicts. On June 1, 2023, a video titled "A University in Jiangxi Eats Mouse's Head in Food" attracted attention online. On June 3rd, the official Blog account of the involved university released a situation report, stating that the student confirmed that the foreign object they had eaten was a duck neck and clarified the video content. However, the response from multiple parties did not quell the controversy, triggering more questioning voices. Related topics have been frequently searched on various platforms, with a cumulative hot search duration of up to 820 hours. The school had a certain degree of "misjudgment" regarding the public opinion incident, and the initial response to "excessive force" directly led to a complete outbreak of public opinion in the future. Moreover, the official response was unclear and did not provide factual evidence, making it impossible to respond publicly and transparently to public opinion concerns. The lack of credibility has sparked a lot of questioning. During the outbreak stage, public opinion continued to escalate and ferment with the development of the incident, affecting not only schools, but also the response of the local municipal supervision bureau and the intervention of the education department, which did not dispel the public's doubts. Universities are too rigid, tedious, and rough in guiding online public opinion, which makes the effectiveness of online public opinion guidance in universities not obvious or even counterproductive[8].

3.3.2 The government department has not established effective institutionalized management measures for universities

Firstly, the government lacks unified guidance and norms for universities, and government departments lack clear guidance and norms in guiding online public opinion in universities, resulting in significant differences in handling online public opinion crises among regions and universities. This lack of unified guidance and norms makes it difficult for universities to respond to online public opinion in a targeted manner, which can lead to inappropriate responses or handling methods.

Secondly, there is no corresponding system to regulate and constrain the different differences in handling online public opinion among regions and universities, nor specific analysis of specific issues. There is a lack of timely response and collaboration mechanisms. The guidance of online public opinion involves multiple departments and institutions, and effective communication and collaboration mechanisms need to be established between government departments to jointly address online public opinion issues[9]. However, due to unclear division of responsibilities and poor information sharing

among various departments, government departments often face issues of information isolation and ineffective collaboration in guiding online public opinion in universities. Government departments often experience slow response and scattered actions when dealing with online public opinion, which makes it difficult to control and guide the development of public opinion in a timely and effective manner.

Finally, there is a lack of effective supervision, evaluation, and incentive mechanisms established, and government departments lack effective supervision and evaluation mechanisms in guiding online public opinion in universities. The guidance and management of online public opinion requires continuous supervision and evaluation in order to promptly identify and solve problems. However, the supervision and evaluation of government departments on the guidance of online public opinion in universities are relatively weak, leading to the inability to timely detect and solve related problems. Moreover, there is no corresponding punishment or incentive mechanism for the guidance of online public opinion in universities, which makes universities that do not have dedicated personnel to manage this aspect even less proactive in guiding online public opinion.

3.4 College students' knowledge of network law and awareness of network security need to be improved

The legalization of university cyberspace, as an organic component of the entire cyberspace, is an important part of the legalization of cyberspace. At present, China has introduced many laws and regulations in the field of network management, such as the Cybersecurity Law of the People's Republic of China[10]. However, a survey of 3911 students from 61 universities in Shanghai shows that in the Shanghai region with higher education levels, 22% of students are still unaware of the Cybersecurity Law of the People's Republic of China, and 2% of students are even completely unaware of internet related laws. So, the internet literacy of college students in other regions is even more worrying. Moreover, when universities interpret the content of relevant regulations, there are often many problems such as inadequate understanding of the requirements of higher-level departments, insufficient attention, and superficial implementation measures. Some universities only adopt online learning or self-learning forms when organizing related learning activities, without paying attention to improving the quality of the activities and only completing tasks, resulting in a small number of participants in the activities. The public opinion guidance group in universities and the legal thinking of college students are weak, and the awareness of network security regulations among college students needs to be further improved.

According to the Criminal Law of our country, if the same defamatory information is actually clicked or browsed more than 5000 times, or forwarded more than 500 times, and the circumstances are serious, it constitutes the crime of defamation. However, some college students have weak awareness of ethical norms and low awareness of cybersecurity regulations, making it difficult to effectively filter out negative effects of the internet and false reports from news media through personal knowledge. This makes them susceptible to becoming disseminators and supporters of negative public opinion. Therefore, it is not uncommon for some college students to spread online rumors, pollute the online public opinion space, and disrupt the order of social life. The series of cases involving college students' online dissemination of needlework rumors and detention for three days, Gansu university student's online release of "child snatching" rumors and detention for ten days, and Xi'an university student's "black" earthquake bureau website dissemination of rumors and sentencing for one and a half years all indicate that the online legal education of universities still needs to be improved, and the legal awareness, rule of law thinking, and awareness of network security regulations of college students urgently need to be strengthened.

3.5 Backward supporting technology for guiding online public opinion in universities, insufficient hardware facilities and platform support

With the continuous development and changes of network technology, the forms and dissemination methods of online public opinion are also constantly evolving, with explosive growth in data transmission and increasing difficulty in public opinion control. However, government departments have invested relatively little in software technology, hardware investment, and platform construction for guiding online public opinion, and the speed of technology, equipment, and platform updates has been slow. The "Report on the Development of Campus Culture Construction in Colleges and Universities (2022)" shows that 82.72% of the annual operating expenses (excluding hardware investment) of campus media in universities nationwide are within 100000 yuan, and only 9.08% of the

operating expenses of campus media are above 200000 yuan. The operating expenses of campus media themselves are relatively low, and the funds invested in network public opinion guidance work led by university media are even more insufficient. This leads to a relatively insufficient data processing ability in the process of guiding online public opinion in universities, which makes it difficult to adapt to new situations in a timely manner and effectively monitor, analyze, and guide online public opinion.

The amount of information on online public opinion is huge and diverse, requiring the public opinion guidance department to have strong data processing capabilities for public opinion analysis and early warning. However, due to the level of software technology and resource limitations, the online public opinion guidance departments in universities often cannot fully utilize technical means such as big data analysis[11], and cannot accurately and quickly grasp the dynamics and trends of online public opinion. In addition, government departments lack hardware tools and flexible and effective guidance platforms in guiding online public opinion in universities. The network public opinion monitoring and analysis system includes a network public opinion information monitoring and analysis platform and hardware facilities that provide support for the entire business, a database group for collecting[12], processing, and warning network public opinion information, and professional application software systems. Due to the unique nature of online public opinion in universities, it is necessary for government departments to guide the development and provision of these specialized online public opinion guidance platforms and equipment for universities, and to provide funding, talent, systems, projects, and other guarantees for universities to better monitor, analyze, and guide public opinion. However, the current government departments' investment and research and development in this area are relatively insufficient, resulting in their inability to meet the needs of online public opinion guidance in universities.

4. Countermeasures and suggestions

4.1 Under the overall planning of the government, strengthen the formulation of guiding policies, increase public opinion promotion, and promote the participation of diverse subjects

We should prioritize online public opinion work as a top priority in propaganda and ideological work, and firmly grasp the dominant power of online ideological work and the initiative in the battlefield of online public opinion in our own hands. By strengthening policy guidance, public opinion guidance, and promoting the participation of diverse entities, government departments can guide online public opinion, resolve internal contradictions and problems in universities, prevent and respond to ideological attacks and negative public opinion influences from complex domestic and foreign environments, and create a clear online space and campus environment to help college students improve their online literacy.

One is to strengthen policy guidance. The government has introduced relevant policies and regulations to clarify the main body, objectives, principles, and division of responsibilities for guiding online public opinion in universities. Policy guidance can encourage universities to clarify their main guiding position in online public opinion guidance, have a clear understanding of their guiding goals, follow norms and moral standards, and understand their roles and job responsibilities based on a clear division of responsibilities, maintaining the correctness and impartiality of public opinion guidance and the timeliness and accuracy of its implementation. The second is to strengthen public opinion guidance. The government guides public opinion on the online public opinion of universities through media promotion, issuing statements, and establishing authoritative spokespersons. The government can invite experts to express authoritative opinions and voices, guide public opinion to pay attention to public interests and social stability, reduce the dissemination of bad information, and maintain the reputation and image of universities. The third is to promote the participation of diverse subjects. The government encourages multiple entities to participate in the guidance of online public opinion in universities, including university teachers and students, experts and scholars, media, etc., and increases the number of entities participating in the guidance of online public opinion. The government can also organize relevant forums and seminars to promote the joint participation of all parties in online public opinion guidance, form a joint force, improve guidance effectiveness, jointly maintain a clear online space, and let rumors and negative content nowhere to hide.

4.2 Under the coordination of the government, promote the improvement of the ability of universities in different regions to guide online public opinion

To eliminate regional differences in the response of universities to online public opinion, enhance the sensitivity of public opinion in economically underdeveloped areas, and comprehensively enhance the guiding ability of online public opinion in universities throughout society, the following aspects can be taken into consideration. For economically underdeveloped areas, on the one hand, it is necessary to strengthen training on the improvement of the online public opinion guidance ability of local universities and governments. Regular learning of relevant laws and regulations of the Party and government on network governance can be organized, emphasizing the necessity of online public opinion guidance in universities, improving the ideological position of local governments and universities in online public opinion guidance, and urging them to pay attention to the supervision and handling of public opinion; On the other hand, [13]we need to assist local universities in building a professional team for online public opinion guidance. We can cultivate and dispatch public opinion oriented professionals to enter universities, cooperate with the comprehensive selection of information technology talents, network platform management talents, student service teams, etc., and create a university public opinion management team that can effectively solve problems and report hidden dangers in a timely manner. For economically developed regions, the focus should be shifted to improving the online literacy of netizens. The national education regulatory authorities can collaborate with propaganda departments to strengthen the popularization and education of relevant laws and regulations, so that netizens can establish a sense of ownership, actively respond to government policies, participate in the supervision and governance of online public opinion, and let more and more rational voices overwhelm irrational behavior. In addition, the national education regulatory department also needs to establish communication channels for universities in different regions to promote the exchange and promotion of experience in guiding online public opinion in universities. For example, through online professional platforms, excellent cases of online public opinion processing in major universities can be displayed and failure cases can be comprehensively analyzed, which is convenient for universities to learn from and reflect on, and can also help universities in the early stages of online public opinion crisis, Seeking help from other universities with similar experience and jointly developing the best response plan; An offline university online public opinion guidance seminar can also be held. After a typical university online public opinion event occurs, major universities can convene a centralized meeting to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the online public opinion response process. During the meeting, good experiences and methods can be shared and learned, achieving common progress.

4.3 Expand government public opinion guidance methods, strengthen supervision and law enforcement, and establish a coordination mechanism between universities and local governments

The government should pay attention to the methods of guiding public opinion, strengthen network information and supervision, and crack down on law enforcement of network adverse events. It should also establish a complete coordination mechanism, pay attention to cross departmental collaboration, enhance the collaborative force of network public opinion guidance, strengthen information sharing between universities and the government, collaborate in carrying out network public opinion guidance work in universities, and jointly create and maintain the network net land of universities.

When guiding public opinion, it is necessary to have timeliness, initiative, and foresight. The openness and convenience of the internet allow for the rapid development of online public opinion. Therefore, when conducting public opinion guidance, it is necessary to timely detect public opinion, actively respond to public opinion, and anticipate potential public opinion, so as to prevent small changes and avoid leaving room for negative public opinion to develop. Network public opinion guidance tailored to local conditions. Based on the different differences in handling online public opinion among regions and universities, analyze specific issues and establish regional and regional systems to regulate and guide online public opinion. Strengthen supervision and law enforcement. The government should strengthen the supervision and law enforcement of the guidance of online public opinion in universities, formulate specific regulatory requirements, ensure that universities conduct online public opinion guidance in accordance with the law, and promptly report and handle violations of negative response to public opinion events, avoidance, blocking, deletion of posts, shirking responsibility, and threat strikes. The government needs to establish a coordination mechanism for guiding online public opinion in universities, strengthen information sharing, including establishing joint meetings and specialized working groups.

4.4 The government urges universities to integrate legal education into teaching and management, and strengthen legal ideological education

In the daily education and management of college students, universities should integrate legal knowledge popularization, increase the popularization of legal knowledge in network security management, and enhance college students' legal awareness and network literacy when facing online public opinion. To enhance the awareness of network security among college students, the government should play a good role as a "guide", guiding universities to implement and achieve results in student daily management, education and teaching, and innovation in legal popularization forms.

Firstly, the leadership of universities should attach importance to the legal binding role of online public opinion, and can integrate legal regulations into the school rules and regulations by comparing them with existing network management laws and regulations. Each university should keep up with the times, ensure that the school rules and regulations are in line with the latest internet laws and regulations, judicial interpretations, and policy documents, integrate the management of online public opinion into students' daily management, and ensure that there is a "law" for the governance of online public opinion in our school. Secondly, it is necessary to update the content of the textbooks and incorporate the latest internet regulations and cases of public ethics in the teaching process. At the same time, universities can expand the use of second classrooms and social organizations to carry out legal learning activities and publicity and education. In addition, the role of campus electronic screens, broadcasts, networks, display windows, and promotional columns should also be fully utilized to popularize the content of internet laws, regulations, and policy documents, promote the outstanding measures and experiences of guiding the rule of law through online public opinion in universities nationwide, and effectively strengthen the legal thinking, legal awareness, and network literacy of all teachers and students in online public opinion.

4.5 The government promotes technological research and theoretical research related to online public opinion guidance

With the popularization of the Internet, it has brought about rapid dissemination, large information capacity, and diverse forms of online public opinion, which poses technical and management challenges to the guidance of online public opinion in universities. The government should provide support for universities in terms of technology, equipment, platforms, funds, talents, projects, etc., increase the research and application of network public opinion guidance technology for universities, and ensure the operation of their hardware equipment and platforms.

Firstly, the government should provide relevant network public opinion guidance support to universities, including data collection and analysis tools, network security equipment hardware, etc., in order to enhance the technical capabilities of university network public opinion guidance and better respond to complex network public opinion situations. Secondly, the government can increase funding and policy preferences for the research and development of related technologies and theories guided by online public opinion through bidding or special research projects, in order to promote the development of related technologies and theories. Finally, the government actively builds platforms to promote technological exchange and cooperation between universities and between universities and enterprises, jointly developing and applying network public opinion guidance technologies, and improving the effectiveness of network public opinion guidance in universities.

5. Conclusion

In the era of internet popularization, online public opinion guidance has become an important part of public management, and it affects national security and social stability. This article takes public management as the benchmark and direction, based on the perspectives of the government and education regulatory departments, and elaborates on the current problems in the guidance of online public opinion in universities from five levels: politics, economy, administration, law, and technology. It also puts forward countermeasures and suggestions in improving political positions, improving legal policies, building platform channels, improving institutional mechanisms, and strengthening scientific and technological research and development[14].

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