

Exploration of Response Strategies for Network Public Opinion Crisis Events in Vocational Colleges Based on the 4R Crisis Management Theory

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Abstract: *The rapid development of the Internet and big data makes online public opinion events very easy to occur. The management of online public opinion crisis in colleges and universities is an important part of the management of colleges and universities. Higher vocational colleges face greater challenges due to the complex structure of students, relatively weak cultural ability and other problems. This paper, starting from the theory of 4R crisis management, analyzes the characteristics of online public opinion communication in higher vocational colleges, analyzes the problems from the four stages of reduction, preparation, response and recovery, and puts forward countermeasures for online public opinion crisis events in higher vocational colleges.*

Keywords: 4R theory, Vocational colleges, Online public opinion.

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of the Internet, we media in the era of big data emerged at the historic moment. As of June 2022, the Internet penetration rate in China has reached 74.4%. With the change of the main channels of information dissemination, people's social ways have also changed dramatically, and online public opinion events have also entered a high incidence stage. The occurrence of online public opinion affects the stability and harmony of society. The academic research on public opinion in China started very late. Wang Laihua, a Chinese scholar, first defined the term "public opinion" in the 1990s. He believed that "public opinion refers to the social and political attitude of the people as the subject to the state administrator as the object around the occurrence, development and change of intermediary social events in a certain social space". With the rapid development of the Internet, the public shifted the place of information exchange, and online public opinion is the political attitude of Internet users to social events. Due to the boundless nature of online spaces, the public, as netizens, is more prone to hiding their identities compared to offline platforms. Online public opinion can easily lose control, causing a chain reaction and leading to unexpected events that can affect social stability and harmony.

The safety and stability of universities are an important part of national political and social development. Universities are responsible for cultivating talents and manpower for the modernization of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and their safety and stability are also related to the overall stability of the country and society. Ordinary universities are divided into undergraduate schools and junior colleges, and vocational colleges are also the first level colleges of Chinese universities. They are the higher stage of vocational and technical education. In the past decade, due to the needs of social development, domestic vocational education has also made new developments. The vigorous promotion of vocational education has gradually expanded the scale of vocational colleges. The admission score line of vocational

colleges for the college entrance examination is lower than that of ordinary undergraduate colleges, and students have relatively weak cultural abilities. At the same time, the student source structure of vocational colleges is relatively complex. In addition to college entrance examination students, vocational schools, vocational colleges and other students are also accepted. Their thinking ability and knowledge foundation are relatively lacking, and they are easily affected by negative online public opinion events. The top-level design of network public opinion management in vocational colleges is not sound. The "Emergency Response Law of the People's Republic of China", Cybersecurity Law The introduction of laws and regulations such as the "Emergency Plan for Sudden Public Incidents in the Education System" has not solved the targeted problem of emergency management of online public opinion in vocational colleges, further increasing the difficulty of online public opinion management in vocational colleges. This article takes vocational colleges as the research object and uses Robert Hiss' 4R theory to analyze and discuss the response to online public opinion crisis events, which has certain practical significance.

2. The Coupling of 4R Theory and Response to Network Public Opinion Crisis Events in Vocational Colleges

Dutch scholar Rosenhault pointed out that crisis is an event that poses a threat to the social system and requires decision-making under time pressure and uncertainty. It has the characteristics of suddenness, focus, destructiveness, and urgency. Network public opinion crisis events are an extension of crisis in the development of the times. Due to their special nature, network public opinion crisis events in vocational colleges are prone to trigger various public crises, so the two have similarities in their characteristics. American scholar Robert Hiss proposed the 4R crisis management theory (referred to as the 4R theory) in his book Crisis Management. Based on the crisis development cycle, he divided crisis management work into four stages: Reduction,

Readiness, Response, and Recovery in the pre -, during -, and post crisis processes, and proposed corresponding strategies for each stage. Domestic scholars generally believe that the life cycle of public opinion generally goes through incubation period, outbreak period, extension period, and decline period, which is in line with the stage division in the 4R theory. With the theoretical support of the 4R crisis management theory, it can provide valuable basis and work guidance for the management of network public opinion crisis events in vocational colleges.

3. Characteristics of Network Public Opinion Crisis Events in Vocational Colleges

3.1 Fast Dissemination Speed

Diversity of transmission channels. With the rapid development of the Internet, people's social places have shifted to many online social platforms in the era of We Media. Although WeChat, Weibo, Xiaohongshu, Tiktok and other software have their own functional focus, they can all meet the social needs of users. These social platforms can hide their identities, register easily, operate easily, and have repeatable content. Each user has the right to express themselves in a variety of forms. This decentralized communication allows the network public opinion to split in a short time, and spread at an extremely fast speed. Freedom of transmission channels. Thanks to the modernization of the country, the public can easily own mobile phones, computers and other products under the development of the Internet. They can freely express their views while quickly obtaining information. They can share information through text, pictures, videos and even live broadcast on the social media platform. Vocational college students are at a mature stage of growth, lack social experience, and their thinking ability still needs to be improved. In the face of diverse content, they are likely to follow the trend blindly and accelerate the spread.

3.2 Wide Dissemination Range

There are numerous platforms for technological development. Education and teaching in higher vocational colleges need to follow the modernization construction closely, and talent cultivation also needs to meet the national modernization requirements. The school network is unblocked, which can facilitate the main teachers and students to obtain information. At the same time, with the development of new media technology, the teachers and students in higher vocational colleges widely use WeChat, Weibo, Tiktok, Little Red Book and other media channels. The contents of these media are interconnected and can be forwarded to each other. As long as downloading and registering through the network, they can be broadcast at home and abroad, which can virtually promote the expansion of information transmission. The critical value for information dissemination is low. As a large public institution in society, vocational colleges have a large number of students as the main body of the school, followed by faculty and staff. Their activities have obvious characteristics of circle formation, and therefore they have also formed certain online communities. Within the community, everyone has similar values, life preferences, etc., which are easy to resonate with. Information filtering is relatively easy, the critical point of dissemination is low, and the high degree of

"contagion" leads to a wide spread and easy outbreak of public opinion.

3.3 Diversified Dissemination

Diversified dissemination subjects. The main body of online public opinion dissemination in vocational colleges includes not only the main group of college students, teachers, and other faculty members on campus, but also a large number of school enterprise cooperation units under the characteristics of vocational colleges, as well as the families behind each student, involving numerous dissemination subjects (hereinafter referred to as teachers and students). Diversify the dissemination of content. The openness of the Internet has made the communication content more diverse. As the main body of college students, they are in an active youth stage and have a wide range of energy and attention, not only limited to campus life, the discussion of people and things on campus, various suggestions and opinions on the development of the school, but also national political events, social entertainment hotspots, etc., showing a diversity of content.

4. Problems in the Management of Online Public Opinion Crisis Events in Vocational Colleges

4.1 Reduction Phase

The awareness of public opinion crisis among teachers and students is weak. Ideological work is an important part of vocational colleges. Faced with the requirements of campus informatization construction, while obtaining convenience, vocational college teachers and students, especially college students, lack certain network literacy. They are prone to easily believe and follow the trend of indistinguishable true and false content, and even spread rumors at will. These are all phenomena of weak awareness of online public opinion. The management of school related systems is not sound. In the face of the rapidly developing internet era, while enjoying the dividends of the times, we should also be aware of the potential negative impacts that may arise behind it. Many vocational colleges lack guidance documents at the school level, and relying solely on laws and regulations on network management issued by the country is not enough. Vocational college management has its own particularities. Once a crisis event related to online public opinion development lacks targeted management systems, it is difficult to form a more scientific and comprehensive plan, and departmental responsibilities are not detailed enough, resulting in the phenomenon of shirking responsibility and causing difficulties in the daily management and operation of the school. The relevant education management lacks foresight. The ideological and political education work is an important task in the education management of vocational colleges. This work should be implemented throughout the student education work, especially in the crisis reduction stage. The lack of pre education work can easily lead to problems such as unclear concepts and weak awareness. At the same time, the ideological and political education work in the early stage of online public opinion is not targeted enough, and it is easy to overlook the popularization of relevant laws and regulations, the cultivation and improvement of network literacy, and the training of emergency management capabilities, which may

lead to potential crises in school online public opinion management.

4.2 Preparatory Stage

The monitoring and early warning technology is outdated. Online public opinion often occurs very quickly and has a wide range, which can easily lead to crisis events. The level of information technology in monitoring is low, and it relies heavily on human monitoring. The means are also relatively single, making it difficult to timely grasp the dynamic trends and data, resulting in a failure to understand the situation of online public opinion. At the same time, the lack of sensitive monitoring technology makes it difficult to quickly form event warning and grasp, resulting in the rapid fermentation of public opinion events and missing the best processing period. The emergency plan is incomplete. Emergency plans are important action references for crisis response. There are often two situations in the development of emergency plans in vocational colleges. One is that emergency management plans are superficial and lack the introduction of emergency plans for online public opinion crisis events. The other is that relevant emergency plans have not kept up with the pace of the development of the Internet era and have not been updated and improved in a timely manner according to the actual situation. Lack of practical exercises and team building. Firstly, practical education activities with themes such as "fire safety" and "fraud prevention" are commonly seen on campus, and there is a lack of practical exercises for teachers and students to respond to online public opinion crisis events, resulting in insufficient response capabilities. Secondly, with the rapid development of the internet, there are certain barriers to the development and use of technology. Most vocational colleges lack professional technical personnel for responding to online public opinion crisis events, many of whom are part-time or in the form of temporary work groups. They lack the establishment of specialized teams or work groups, as well as the training of relevant technology and work processing, which can easily lay huge hidden dangers for the response and handling of online public opinion crisis events.

4.3 Reaction Stage

The information disclosure is not strong enough, and the response is relatively passive. The insufficient information disclosure in response to online public opinion crisis events during the response phase is mainly reflected in the fact that when an online public opinion crisis event has already formed, schools fail to take proactive measures to understand the detailed situation in a timely manner and actively handle the event publicly. In the absence of a system, it is easy to have low efficiency and delayed response, which can lead to asymmetric information dissemination and further spread and expansion of public opinion. At the same time, the response is relatively passive, mainly due to the lack of scientific response methods. Most universities, when dealing with online public opinion crisis events, often see massive amounts of online information and diverse content, and directly use methods such as deletion and blocking to control the spread of events, lacking positive response and explanation. This approach is not useless, but it can easily trigger college students' rebellious and curious psychology, leading to the deterioration of the situation and further fermentation of

public opinion, triggering more negative information. Lack of team style collaborative processing mechanism. The incomplete emergency plan in the preparatory stage makes it difficult to form a professional work team for collaborative response in the response stage of crisis events. This temporary team response method inevitably leads to unclear job responsibilities, unclear rights, and low work efficiency, lack of rapid and sufficient investigation, understanding, and analysis of events, delaying the best response time for crisis events, reducing school trust, and affecting school image construction.

4.4 Recovery Phase

The post event summary and evaluation were not sufficient. Reviewing and summarizing after a crisis event is an important task. Due to the fact that the location and main channels of online public opinion crisis events are invisible and intangible, and the massive amount of online information is constantly updated, it is easy for school departments to relax their vigilance, ignore the process of post event summary and evaluation, and fail to timely sort out, summarize, update, and formulate new emergency plans, which is not conducive to the future development of campus management work. In addition, the harm and impact caused by crisis events cannot be eliminated in an instant, especially for college students who are still in the stage of growth and maturity. The lack of continuous tracking and feedback on the aftermath of the event is not conducive to student education management and services. The education and warning work related to psychological counseling is insufficient. At the same time, vocational colleges are important places for teaching and educating students. The negative impact of online public opinion crisis events may lead to psychological health problems and other secondary effects for young and naive college students who lack guidance and educational warnings.

5. Response Strategies for Network Public Opinion Crisis Events in Vocational Colleges

5.1 Reduction Stage: Education Enhances Crisis Awareness, Establishes and Improves Relevant Systems and Teams

In the 4R crisis management theory, the reduction force, also known as the reduction stage, is the core part of the four stages. Crisis reduction is the prevention and control of early-stage crises, which can be effectively reduced from four aspects: environment, system, structure, and personnel, to reduce the possibility and impact of crisis occurrence.

Enhance awareness of online public opinion crisis. The internet is not a lawless place without boundaries. It is necessary to enhance the awareness of teachers and students and establish crisis awareness through daily learning, education, teaching, practical activities, etc. Especially for college students who lack social experience and need to strengthen their critical thinking abilities, legal education can be used as a starting point to establish security and legal awareness through lectures, competitions, and other forms, firmly establish political direction, improve correct judgment of public opinion, and enhance online public opinion

awareness. Establish relevant systems and form a collaborative team.

Vocational colleges should, in accordance with relevant national laws and regulations, combine their own actual needs, and actively learn from the mature experience of undergraduate institutions, formulate and issue relevant institutional documents on network public opinion crisis events, form emergency management plans under the rules and regulations, and establish work teams that connect teachers, students, and departments at all levels. Firstly, implement the leadership project of the top leader, establish targeted linkage and multi department collaborative work mechanisms, integrate resources to strengthen linkage, clarify responsibilities and effectively respond. Do a good job in educating people under the guidance of ideological and political education. Reduce the management of online public opinion crises in daily life, enhance legal and security knowledge and awareness through "ideological and political+" in daily education and teaching activities, and at the same time, do a good job in management and education. For example, the Information Department and the Security Department jointly carry out themed practical exercises to improve crisis response capabilities. Provide excellent service and education, facilitate feedback channels for teachers and students, improve the quality of campus catering, sports, accommodation and other services, enhance student satisfaction, cultivate students' love for the school, and establish a sense of student ownership and responsibility.

5.2 Prevention Stage: Improve Monitoring System and Contingency Plans, Build and Cultivate Professional Teams

In the 4R crisis management theory, preparedness and preparation stage refer to the systematic prevention of potential crises, such as the establishment of monitoring and early warning systems, the development of emergency management plans, early simulation exercises, team building, etc., to improve the response speed to crises and scientifically and effectively prevent crises.

Establish and improve a network public opinion monitoring and early warning system. Vocational colleges are large-scale institutions in society, and it is particularly important to establish and improve a network public opinion monitoring and early warning system. Vocational colleges need to accelerate the construction of informationized campuses, and can develop or purchase specialized and intelligent network public opinion monitoring and early warning systems through subject teams. By monitoring keywords, dynamic data, etc., warning signals can be formed and sent to strengthen monitoring work. Improve the institutional management system and develop professional emergency plans. A sound management system for online public opinion is a guarantee for responding to work. Vocational colleges need to fully study and develop a network public opinion management system that is in line with the actual situation of the school, based on relevant laws and regulations already issued by the country, to clarify responsibilities and rights, form a systematic response process, and form a scientific emergency plan for online public opinion according to work needs. The plan should fully absorb the opinions and suggestions of

teachers and students, be discussed by professionals, and be voted on by the teacher representative assembly. Strengthen team building and development, and enhance crisis response capabilities. Internet public opinion is a product of the development of the Internet, and it also involves ideological issues, so it is necessary to form a work team with professional technology and high moral quality. Firstly, schools can purchase third-party professional services through service outsourcing and other forms, collaborate with external institutions to participate in online public opinion monitoring and governance, and invite external professionals to conduct themed practical exercises to enhance their quality and abilities. Secondly, by recruiting professionals or cultivating relevant faculty, a full-time and part-time team can be formed to monitor and analyze public opinion data to ensure campus harmony and stability. Finally, as the main body, college students should also be fully absorbed into the team, with student party members and student cadres as the main members. Through training, relevant literacy and abilities can be improved, and signals can be captured and identified in the student group in a timely manner, and reported to the school in a timely manner.

5.3 Response Stage: Actively Respond to Scientific Guidance and Public Opinion, and Collaborate with Both Inside and Outside the School to Respond

The reactive power and response stages in the 4R crisis management theory mainly refer to the ability to quickly and systematically respond to crisis events during the outbreak period, actively and effectively respond to crises through communication and teamwork, control their development, and reduce their damage.

Timely and effectively disclose accurate information. After a crisis event occurs, it is necessary to fully analyze the collected information and promptly report the situation to the public, actively responding to the public. Vocational colleges should pay attention to the management and operation of online platforms in daily life, increase the authority of the platform, and release information in a timely and accurate manner with a sincere attitude. At the same time, other authoritative media can also be used to reduce the negative impact of events and maintain the image of the school. Science guides the direction of public opinion development. Once online public opinion erupts, traditional methods such as deletion and blocking lack certain humanistic care. The role of "opinion leaders" such as teacher representatives, teacher-student party members, student cadres, and student "internet celebrities" can be used to speak out and drive online public opinion to develop in a favorable direction. Collaborative linkage mechanism within and outside the school.

Implement management and service education on campus, smooth work processes and mechanisms, clarify the responsibilities and powers of each department through systems, and cooperate and collaborate with each other. Strengthen communication and cooperation with government departments such as public security departments, affiliated communities, or third-party service agencies outside the school, while also ensuring effective communication between families and schools, and coordinating multiple forces to

respond to online public opinion crisis events.

5.4 Recovery Stage: Timely Review, Summarize and Track Feedback, Implement Education Services Mainly Focused on Psychological Education

The resilience and recovery stages in the 4R crisis management theory refer to the process of reviewing and evaluating losses and impacts, developing recovery plans, and learning from experience to optimize and improve after a crisis event, in order to quickly restore normalcy, repair image and reputation.

Timely review and summarize, continuously track feedback. Led by the Network Public Opinion Crisis Incident Working Group, the departments and personnel involved in the incident are organized to carry out summary work, analyze the reasons for the incident through retrospective analysis, identify deficiencies and shortcomings, and evaluate and update emergency management plans to further improve relevant system documents and personnel allocation and adjustment. At the same time, continuous tracking work can be done to identify omissions and secondary issues through daily learning and work interviews, dormitory visits, and other methods. Do a good job in educating people with a focus on mental health education. Professional psychological counseling teachers should be the main focus, supplemented by counselors and class teachers, to provide guidance on the mental health of college students, alleviate the pressure caused by emergencies, establish and form specialized files, achieve continuous attention, and also do a good job in humanistic care for faculty and staff to ensure the recovery of relevant personnel. In addition, organize warning activities or extended education activities related to the event, such as training on improving college students' online media literacy, theme based new media production competitions, etc. Through practical activities that combine education with entertainment, buffer and eliminate negative impacts, and do a good job in recovery.

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