

The Impact of the Internet on the Formation and Development of Youth Values

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Abstract: The Internet has profoundly changed the cognition and values of youth, providing them with extensive information and innovative platforms, and promoting the formation of values such as individuality and inclusiveness, pioneering and innovation. However, its commercialization and profit-seeking nature, as well as its “decentralized” characteristics, may confuse youth about what values to uphold, or even lead them to overly admire technology and neglect the importance of human nature and the real world. Therefore, education needs to actively respond, leveraging the synergistic role of new technologies in value embedding, ideological leadership, and the guidance of humanistic spirit, to help youth form correct values and ensure that they do not lose themselves while enjoying the convenience brought by technology, adhering to the correct value orientation.

Keywords: Internet; Youth Values; Impact

In the digital era, the Internet profoundly shapes youth’s cognitive world and values. It mirrors multicultural collisions, offering vast information and platforms, fostering individuality, inclusiveness, and innovation. However, its commercialized and decentralized nature poses challenges, potentially leading to value confusion and excessive technology admiration, overlooking humanity and real-world values. Thus, a thorough examination of the Internet’s influence on youth values is crucial for guiding their healthy growth.

1. The Essence and Formation of Youth Values

The connotation of youth values lies in individuals' in-depth cognition, understanding, and choice of themselves and the external world during their youth stage. It encompasses the fundamental perspectives and attitudes of youth towards life goals, moral standards, social responsibilities, and personal development. During the youth period, as individuals' intelligence, emotions, and self-awareness gradually mature, they begin to actively explore and construct their own value system. On one hand, the connotation of youth values is reflected in the pursuit of life goals. Youth begin to consider what they truly desire, how to achieve their life values, and how to balance the relationship between the individual and society in this process. On the other hand, the connotation of youth values is also reflected in the assumption of social responsibilities. With a deeper understanding of society, youth begin to recognize their roles and responsibilities in society, and they are willing to contribute to social progress and development. Therefore, the connotation of youth values is diverse and profound, encompassing aspects such as life goals, moral standards, social responsibilities, and personal development. It is an important spiritual wealth that youth gradually form and continuously improve during their growth process.

The formation of youth values is a complex and crucial process that begins in early youth and gradually stabilizes in mid-youth. During this stage, adolescents begin to move away from complete reliance on adults and instead form their own unique values. The formation of youth values primarily stems from the learning of traditional social values. As they grow, adolescents are exposed to values from multiple levels, including family, school, and society. They begin to understand and accept these concepts, gradually internalizing them into their own values. However, at the same time, adolescents also begin to delve deeply into their own values, which often leads to conflicts and contradictions between traditional values and personal values, manifesting externally as adolescent rebellion. As they enter mid-youth, adolescents' intelligence, emotions, and self-awareness reach a new level. They begin to possess a higher degree of autonomous cognitive ability, enabling them to conduct regular analysis of the society they live in and grasp societal standards to judge various phenomena. This enhancement in ability allows them to delve more deeply into issues of values and gradually form their own unique perspectives. Therefore, the formation of youth values is a complex and crucial process that involves learning traditional social values, reflecting on personal values, and making life choices. During this process, adolescents gradually form their own unique values and begin to pave their own path in life.^[1]

2. The Impact of the Internet on the Formation of Youth Values

While enjoying the convenience and opportunities brought by network technology, we also need to be vigilant about its possible negative impacts and guide the youth to form healthy and positive values. This article aims to explore the impact of network technology on the shaping of youth values and its corresponding countermeasures.

First and foremost, network technology has significantly broadened the avenues for youth to access and consume information, providing them with rapid and convenient resources such as news, social media, and online courses.^[2] This has had profound impacts on their values, cognitive abilities, and practical skills. The diverse network information shapes the values of youth, exposing them to diverse lifestyles and perspectives. Secondly, as network information becomes more intelligent and sophisticated, youth's ability to integrate information has been strengthened, which helps them gain a comprehensive and profound understanding of the world and enhance their value judgment capabilities. The development of network technology has further enhanced youth's ability to utilize information. In particular, the application of virtual reality technology enables youth to stimulate their imagination and creativity through virtual practical activities.

Secondly, online socializing and interaction have opened up a new mode of social experience and interaction for young people. In this virtual environment, youths can engage in extensive and in-depth communication with people from diverse backgrounds through various virtual communities, specific groups, and other online platforms. This cross-boundary social interaction not only greatly enriches the social circles of youths but also helps them build a more diversified and inclusive value system.^[3] However, the double-edged sword effect of online socializing cannot be ignored. It may bring negative impacts such as cyberbullying and the dissemination of false information, which can potentially interfere with or mislead the formation and development of youths' values. Therefore, while enjoying the convenience and fun of online socializing, youths also need to be vigilant, learn to discern the authenticity of information, and maintain a healthy online social environment.

Furthermore, with the continuous development and innovation of network technology, it has had a significant impact on shaping the values of young people. Specifically, cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and virtual reality have brought new cognitive perspectives and communication platforms to young people. These technologies not only expand the cognitive boundaries of young people but also potentially lead to a series of conflicts and changes in values. At the same time, as young people actively participate in technological innovation and development, they have gradually formed values and innovative consciousness closely related to technology. They have not only learned how to use these technologies to solve problems, but also learned to uphold values of openness, innovation, and responsibility in the application of technology.^[4] Therefore, there is a close interaction between the development of network technology and the shaping of young people's values, and the two promote each other, jointly driving social progress and development.

3. The Guiding Path for Youth Values in the Internet Era

As the main force of internet users, youth groups need to actively enhance their digital literacy, face online information with an objective and rational attitude, and maintain independent thinking and value beliefs in the internet era.

Firstly, it is essential to regulate the dissemination role of media. As an important carrier of online public opinion, self-media plays a pivotal role in guiding youth values in society. To effectively fulfill this role, we should prioritize enhancing the political literacy of self-media operating teams. Through regular training and discussions, we can strengthen their sensitivity and sense of responsibility towards information content, ensuring the authenticity and objectivity of disseminated information, thus mitigating the potential impact of adverse information on youth groups. Any discovered violations should be resolutely combated, and legal means should be utilized for punishment if necessary. Self-media should continuously invest in innovative forms and dissemination methods, constantly update technological means, and strengthen their sense of social responsibility.

Secondly, it is necessary to regulate online platforms. With the rapid development of network technology, it is an indisputable fact that it has brought numerous conveniences to society, especially for the younger generation, whose lives have been deeply infiltrated by the internet. While enjoying the many advantages brought by the internet, we should also be alert to its potential negative impacts and avoid falling into a state of excessive dependence. Therefore, online platforms need to uphold positive development concepts, pursue positive applications of technology, actively cooperate with relevant regulations, optimize algorithmic technology, and simultaneously stimulate human critical thinking and subjective initiative to achieve accuracy and inclusiveness in content screening. From the perspective of practical application of online platforms, when conducting user portrait analysis, it is essential to clearly define its scope of application and ethical boundaries, ensuring that human subjective initiative and subject status are not neglected in the integration of the virtual and real worlds.

Thirdly, it is crucial to enhance the digital literacy of youth in order to shape their values in the internet era. Youth must understand the principles of network operation and the influence of online platforms, especially personalized recommendation algorithms. They should ap-

proach online platforms objectively, avoiding blind faith and excessive reliance on the internet. By improving their ability to filter information and think critically, youth can establish a strong sense of value identity and independent thinking online. Maintaining vigilance and clarity in the face of complex online information is essential for youth to avoid being misled or exploited.

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