

The Influence of the Social Media Dissemination of Subcultures on the Learning of Chinese Undergraduates

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Abstract. In recent years, with the increasingly mature algorithm-based push mechanism of online social media, online subcultures have successfully attracted a portion of undergraduate students to join, enabling the growth and expansion of this group. Many undergraduate students who are passionate about subcultures spend a certain proportion of their time participating in subcultural activities (such as comic exhibitions, concerts, and star in-person autograph sessions, etc.) And this phenomenon may lead to a reduction in their study time, the establishment of their life goals, and the efficiency of their group learning in university. Given this background, this paper mainly investigates the impact of undergraduate students' engagement with subcultural content on social media on their learning process. According to the questionnaire survey data of undergraduate students around the author and those on social media, descriptive statistical analysis was employed to analyze the learning situations of the subculture group and the non-subculture group. The research has found that being addicted to subcultures can affect the study duration and group learning efficiency of undergraduate students, and can also promote the establishment of life goals. This indicates that the subcultural content in social media has a certain influence on the learning process of undergraduate students.

Keywords: Subculture, undergraduate, learning process

1. Introduction

With the increasingly sophisticated algorithmic push mechanism of social media, more and more undergraduate students are embracing online subcultures. However, there are also many college students whose study performance is affected by the pleasure they derive from subcultures. This study mainly focuses on how subcultures affect the study time, learning goals, and the efficiency of group cooperation among college students. The final research objective of this study is to further explore the influence of subcultural social media dissemination on college students in their actual learning scenarios. In order to obtain the answers to the research questions, the questionnaire survey method was employed, and undergraduate students from several universities were surveyed. The advantage of this method lies in its ability to provide a more direct understanding of the actual situation of undergraduate students, which is conducive to the progress of the research. In addition, this study is meaningful in exploring the reasons for the poor academic performance of undergraduate students nowadays.

2. Literature review and exploring questions development

2.1. Subculture and learning enthusiasm

Since its inception, subculture has developed into numerous categories such as anime, K-pop, hip-hop, etc. However, for some subcultures, if college students spend too much time immersed in them, it may lead to certain psychological problems that could affect their study performance. According to a study conducted by Tohoku University in Japan, people who have been exposed to Japanese anime and idol culture for a long time may become disconnected from fashion and even turn into some "homebodies" – individuals who rarely go out. Ultimately, this often leads to their frequent truancy from school and their being isolated by their peers, which may cause them to develop some symptoms of depression and have a direct impact on learning, and these negative behaviors may lead to a further reduction in the duration of students' study time [1]. Furthermore, according to a study conducted by Xinjiang Second Medical College on medical students, when facing difficulties in expressing emotions, medical students may turn to the online world to seek emotional support, avoiding the display of problems through negative means, which can lead to addiction to mobile phones [2]. The more addicted a student becomes to his/her mobile phone, the lower his/her enthusiasm for learning will be. When students are addicted to the online world, they will spend a great deal of time in the virtual space, thereby reducing the time available for studying [2]. As subculture constitutes a significant portion of online content in the digital world, if college students become addicted to it, it will inevitably lead to an increase in the time they spend browsing and enjoying subcultural content, thereby reducing the time available for studying.

2.2. Subculture and learning gumption

Subculture refers to the unique values, beliefs, habits and lifestyles that are shared by a secondary group belonging to a certain cultural group. And some subcultures also manage to resist the influence of mainstream culture in a special way. The online subculture is characterized by entertainment and individuality, which can cause college students to lose their desire to study and become complacent. This is mainly manifested in their rejection of real life and their contempt for mainstream values [3]. because in the world of online subcultures, all kinds of subcultures merely make simple affirmations or negations based on the surface of social issues, and attempt to numb the public through some forms of entertainment and weaken their ability to deeply reflect on the world and their ability to make independent judgments, thereby causing people to gradually become disconnected from social reality [4]. At the same time, online subcultures will present a virtual "utopian" world to contemporary college students. In this world, people do not need to worry about issues related to survival or the anxiety caused by pressure. They can simply immerse themselves in the sensory-stimulating world. Under the subtle influence of this online subculture, college students will gradually reduce their thinking about changes in the real world and their own ideals and destinies, and merely content themselves with the most basic physical and sensory pleasures. As a result, they increasingly became the followers of online subculture, thereby weakening the status of the original values [4].

2.3. Subculture and personal relationship

Nowadays, although online subculture create a social circle for many college students to make friends, where college students gather together due to some common interests and hobbies. Then a

sense of community identity has emerged, leading to the trend of subculture "fragmentation" into smaller groups [5]. It not only enables college students to be visible in the virtual online space, but also gives them the opportunity to be recognized by others and find psychological support. However, overly relying on this virtual world for social interaction and meeting one's own needs may lead to a decline in interpersonal communication skills in real life, and even cause anxiety and loneliness among college students, thereby neglecting the interpersonal relationships in reality [6]. Furthermore, the "information bubble" effect in the online world and the precise algorithmic recommendations make it difficult for individual college students to access viewpoints and content from other communities. Over time, this can lead to their viewpoints becoming overly extreme, thereby causing conflicts and opposition between different communities [5]. At the same time, many middle school students will categorize and rank different types of subcultures based on the reputation and influence of each online subculture. These facts may all contribute to the fact that different sub-cultural communities have strong barriers and find it difficult to communicate with each other.

2.4. Exploring questions

The state of study, the drive for academic progress, as well as interpersonal relationships may all be closely related to the allure and entertainment value of online subcultural content. However, most of the existing studies have only focused on the influence of subcultures on mainstream culture and the dissemination of Chinese ideology, as well as the measures taken in response, rather than investigating the impact of these three factors on the learning of college students. To explore the extent to which the dissemination of subcultural content through social media affects the learning status of college students, the following three research questions are proposed.

Q1: To what extent does subculture participation affect the daily study time of undergraduate students?

Q2: Will the content of subcultures cause undergraduate students to focus on satisfying the beauty of the virtual world, thereby undermining their drive for progress in the real world?

Q3: Does the diverse orientation of undergraduate students towards subcultures reduce the efficiency of group cooperative learning in universities?

3. Method

3.1. Sample size and subjects

This experiment mainly relied on questionnaire surveys as the data source. The use of the questionnaire survey method enables targeted analysis of the influence of subcultures in the current environment on the learning process of college students. It is also possible to obtain a large amount of relevant data through the Internet within a relatively short period of time, which can improve the efficiency of the research and facilitate its progress. The current research on college students' subculture has employed such methods, obtaining a large amount of data and applying it to various correlation analyses, thereby deriving the correlations between college students' subculture and other aspects.

The subjects of the questionnaire survey were mainly full-time undergraduate students studying in schools across the country because this group, compared to part-time undergraduate students and students of other educational levels, has less contact with society and has ample study time, they are more susceptible to the influence of subcultures. Moreover, this group is in the learning stage.

Learning is an obligation for a student, so they have the necessity and possibility to devote their time to study. The number of questionnaires collected this time is 341. The age distribution is mainly concentrated in the 18-25 age group, and the number of senior students is higher than that of the other three grades. Moreover, the number of college students exposed to subcultures is approximately three times that of those not exposed to them.

3.2. Measurements

At the beginning of the survey, the question "Have you ever known or been exposed to subcultures?" was posed, with two options available for selection - "Yes | No". This was done to initially distinguish between students who are followers of subcultures and those who have never been exposed to or dislike subcultures, thereby dividing the research on the following three aspects into two control experimental groups.

3.2.1. Learning time

Regarding the investigation of the time they spend on studying on a daily basis, the two survey groups asked the respondents, "On average, how long you spend on professional study (such as reviewing, previewing, doing homework, etc.) each day?" The respondents must choose from the four options of "less than 1 hour, 1-2 hours, 2-3 hours, and more than 3 hours", in order to demonstrate whether the characteristics of online subculture would cause college students to lose interest in their studies and sacrifice their study time to enjoy the pleasures brought by online subculture. Furthermore, for students belonging to subculture groups, in order to test the priority of subculture in their schedules, another question was raised: "Have you ever postponed or interrupted your studies because of browsing subcultural content?" The college students from subculture groups were required to choose from the four frequency-related words: "often", "occasionally", "rarely", and "never".

3.2.2. Learning gumption

In this module, the respondents need to answer two questions. The first one is "Do you have clear learning or career goals?" and they are provided with four options: "Yes, very clear, have a general direction, not yet clear, no goals". This is to determine whether there is a general direction for striving and the degree of clarity. The second question is "Have you formulated a specific plan to achieve your goals and taken action?" Through this question, the answers to the previous question can be linked together to determine whether most people with goals are practical. This can help assess whether the characteristics of the subculture have led to the absence of mainstream values such as "striving for ideals" and "studying hard", as well as the resulting indifferent attitude towards life [3].

3.2.3. Group cooperative learning

Finally, in terms of group learning, in order to test whether the respondents found it more difficult to cooperate in groups due to the influence of subcultures, the question "Do you think it is difficult for you to cooperate with classmates who have different interests?" was presented. Then, in order to verify whether this difficulty would manifest as a conflict, the following question was posed: "Have you ever had a dispute with your group members due to disagreement in opinions or differences in interests during group cooperative learning?" This was done to determine whether the

"circularization" brought about by subcultures would reduce the communication skills of college students and also weaken the trust between people and whether the "information bubble" phenomenon in modern networks, which leads to extreme polarization of viewpoints among subculture communities, will hinder the group collaboration of college students [5].

3.3. Statistical analysis method

This research aims to explore the impact of subculture-based social media dissemination on the learning of contemporary university undergraduates. It is analyzed from three aspects: study time, group study, and ideal goals. The controlled variables are undergraduate students who have been exposed to subculture content and those who have not. The purpose is to compare the differences in these three aspects between the students who have been exposed to subculture and those who have not. The descriptive statistical analysis method enables the obtained data to be expressed visually, and it can also present these three sets of data in a more intuitive way. This not only makes the conclusion more compelling, but also allows readers to understand the content at a glance.

For the method of structural equation analysis, it is less suitable compared to descriptive statistical analysis. This is because structural equation analysis is designed to reveal the interrelationships among multiple variables and to obtain multiple results. These results are presented in a more intuitive way through a path diagram. This experiment aims to establish two control groups: one consisting of undergraduate students who have had contact with subcultures, and the other consisting of those who have had no contact with subcultures. The purpose is to compare the relationships among their study time, motivation for striving, and the degree of harmony in group cooperation. Moreover, this experiment has relatively few potential variables, making it impossible to construct a comprehensive path diagram.

In conclusion, the descriptive statistical analysis was ultimately chosen as the analysis method for this data.

4. Result

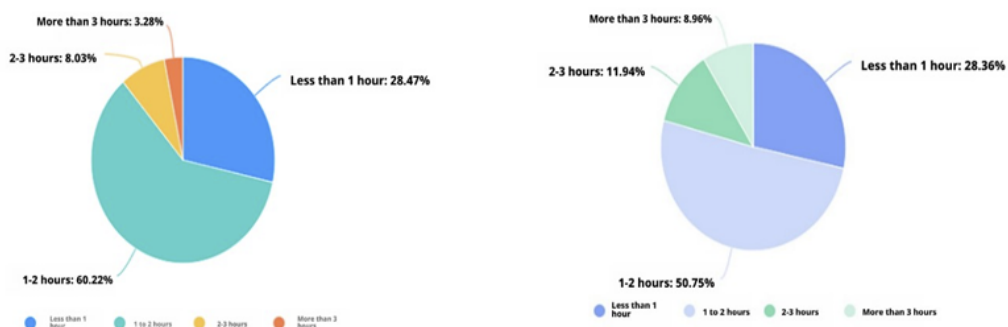


Figure 1. The proportion of the time taken in taken in learning of subcultural students(left) and non-subcultural students(right)

As shown in Figure 1, for both groups, the learning time of 1-2 hours accounted for the majority of both the subculture and non-subculture groups, reaching 60.22% and 50.75% respectively. However, for the subculture control group, those who spent less than 1 hour on learning were approximately twice as many as those who spent 2-3 hours. On the contrary, for the other group, the situation was exactly the opposite. For those who spent more than 3 hours on learning, the subculture control group was slightly less than the non-subculture control group.



Figure 2. Distribution map of ideal execution ability for subculture contacters (left) and non-subculture contacters (right)

As shown in Figure 2, the proportion of individuals in the subculture contact group who have a clear direction and a definite goal is higher than that of the non-subculture group. From a longitudinal perspective, the internal gap among those without a goal within the subculture group is also much larger than that in the non-subculture group.



Figure 3. The proportion of those in the subculture group (on the left) and the non-subculture group (on the right) who have difficulty cooperating with those who have different interests

As shown in Figure 3, there is little difference between the subculture group and the non-subculture group, as well as between the people who have difficulty cooperating and those who cooperate easily.

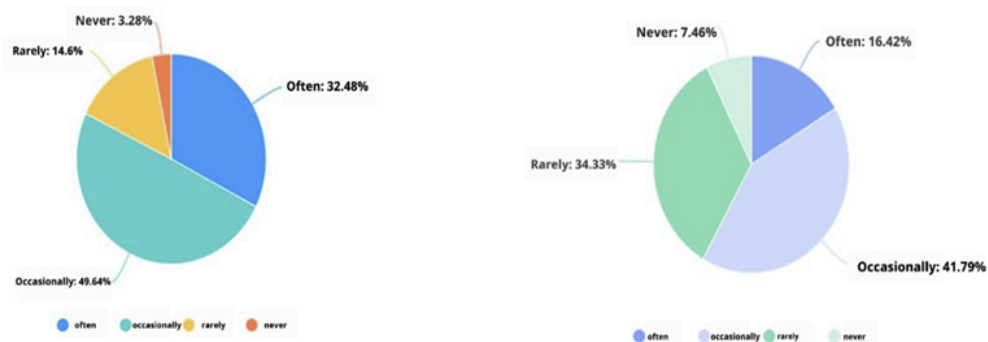


Figure 4. The proportion of those in the subculture group (on the left) and the non-subculture group (on the right) who have difficulty cooperating with those who have different interests

As shown in Figure 4, although it was mentioned in the previous text that there was not a significant difference in the proportion of people in the two groups who found it difficult to cooperate due to a mismatch in interests, during cooperation, the probability of conflicts occurring in the subculture group was much higher than that in the non-subculture group.

5. Discussion

This study mainly examined the basic conditions of the subculture undergraduate group and the non-subculture undergraduate group in terms of study duration, learning motivation, and group cooperation. The research found that within a wide range of time periods, the proportion of time spent by non-subculture groups was higher than that of subculture groups. That is to say, the time spent on learning by subculture groups was significantly less than that of non-subculture groups. Therefore, for research question 1, the participation of subcultures has a significant impact on the daily study time of undergraduate students. Secondly, in terms of setting career goals. The proportion of subculture groups with clear goals is significantly higher than that of non-subculture groups. Thus, for research question 2, the browsing of subcultural content by undergraduate students is unlikely to have a significant impact on their academic progress. Thirdly, in terms of interpersonal relationships, the proportion of the subculture group who perceived cooperation as difficult was similar to that of the non-subculture group. However, the proportion of conflicts arising from disagreement during cooperation was higher in the subculture group than in the non-subculture group. So for research question 3: The diverse attitudes of undergraduate students towards subcultures generally have little impact on the efficiency of group cooperation. However, if there are differences, this diversity of attitudes will make these differences even more severe.

The reason why subcultural content reduces the study time of college students to some extent is that there are certain subcultures, such as online games. If college students are overly addicted to these games, it will, on the one hand, lead to severe lack of concentration, and subsequently result in poor performance in studies [7]. At the same time, spending a long time watching anime from the anime world may cause viewers to become so deeply engrossed that they become unable to extricate themselves and gradually drift further away from real life [8]. And as part of the college student's life, study life is also affected to some extent by the addiction to subcultures, thereby reducing the proportion of study.

Regarding the second research question, this study's findings are contrary to what was discovered in previous studies, which indicated that the popularity of subcultures poses challenges to the dissemination of mainstream culture [4]. From a horizontal perspective, the number of subcultures with clear goals is greater than that of non-subcultures. However, from a vertical perspective, the disparity in the presence of specific target groups among subcultures is much greater than that among non-subcultures. Because contemporary college students generally face employment pressure, in such an environment, two extreme phenomena may occur. One is that students need to continuously acquire a lot of knowledge outside of class to improve themselves; the other is that students take everything lightly, go with the flow, and spend their college years with the mindset of "giving up" [9].

For the former group, due to the heavy workload and high pressure of their regular studies, they need subcultural content and engage in subcultural activities to relieve their stress. However, for these college students who have no further desires or ambitions, the academic pressure becomes a burden and a hindrance for them. Therefore, they may enter the virtual world of the internet and seek psychological relief and escape through games and other means, which further undermines their desire to strive [10].

Regarding the distribution of "the proportion of difficulties in cooperation" between the subculture group and the non-subculture group, as well as "the proportion of conflicts arising during cooperation", although there is not much difference in the subjective perception of the "proportion of difficulties in cooperation", when it comes to the issue of conflicts arising from practical problems during cooperation, most non-subculture individuals are more likely to escalate some conflicts compared to the subculture individuals. According to a study exploring the relationship between internet addiction and interpersonal relationships, the degree of internet addiction is negatively correlated with the level or quality of interpersonal relationships. When a person relies on being immersed in the online social world to obtain social support, it will have a negative impact on those offline intimate relationships [11]. Those college students who are deeply immersed in online subculture mostly engage in browsing subcultural content and socializing within the subculture communities online. If this continues for a long time, it may undermine the close relationships with some classmates, leading to difficulties in cooperation and even conflicts at certain times. Based on the survey, the number of non-subcultural individuals is much smaller than that of subcultural individuals. Therefore, correspondingly, non-subcultural culture individuals are more likely to experience difficulties in cooperation compared to subcultural individuals.

6. Conclusion

According to the questionnaire data, it was found that consuming subcultural content would significantly affect the amount of time university undergraduates spend on their studies. In contrast, it has little impact on the motivation for learning and the difficulty of group cooperation. However, it will to some extent deepen the conflicts within the group cooperation. Further conclusions can be drawn: College students' immersion in subcultures will have a certain impact on the learning process.

This research holds significant reference value for the future direction of scientifically improving the educational system and model of universities in the context of the increasingly prevalent trend of subcultures. In the future, as the types of subcultures continue to increase and the online fragmentation becomes more severe, more in-depth research should be conducted on how mainstream culture can leverage subcultures for dissemination.

This study also reveals some limitations that need to be mentioned. Firstly, there is a difference in the sample size between the two groups of subjects. Besides, the survey results cannot adequately represent the influence of subcultures on the learning process of college students across the China. In the future, this questionnaire should be divided into two parts. One part should be given to the subculture group, and the other part to the non-subculture group. At the same time, the questionnaire should be targetedly distributed to the university social circles and forums in these underserved areas to expand the diversity of the sample.

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