

# Study on the Network Political Participation of College Students Born in 1990s

Based on a Survey about 591 College Students at 8 Universities in Beijing

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**Abstract**—The survey shows that the current network political participation of college students born in 1990s in Beijing's universities presents four main features which include wide variety of network political participation channels, leading by opinion leaders, instant participation model, and limited participation validity. The main reasons that lead to the low validity of the network political participation of College Students include five aspects: not perfect of the network related system and legal system, not enough standard of the construction and service of the government network platform, disordered by the network information collaboration technology, the one-sided nature of the family education and its political quality, and the lag of the development of College Students' political accomplishment. It is necessary to coordinate the social, government, school, family and college students to promote their orderly network political participation. The society should cultivate the mainstream awareness and create a positive network political and cultural soft power. The government should promote the internet legislation, and create a service-oriented network of government platform to improve the credibility of the government network. The universities should strengthen the education of students' political participation and encourage them to participate in political practice, so as to improve the guiding force of political participation. The parents should establish a correct political view and improve their own network application level in order to strengthen the family atmosphere of infection. College students should have a sense of social responsibility and constantly improve their political and moral quality and political participation ability.

**Keywords**—*Internet Era; college students born in 1990s; network political participation; Internet thinking*

## I. INTRODUCTION

We all know that the quality and ability of the youth directly affect the state's development. College students' network political participation quality and ability in the internet age is related to the orderly development of national politics. Analysis of College Students' network political participation status and influence factors has a great significance to unite the power of the youth to realize the great Chinese dream.

Network political participation is the political participation of internet users on the internet platform<sup>[1]</sup>. Network political participation is a new form of political participation, which is produced by the combination of political participation and network technology. The network political participation is the extension and innovation of the traditional political participation in the network. The network political participation mainly includes the network political expression, network political association, network political contact, network political surveillance, network voting and so on<sup>[2]</sup>. College students born in 1990s are the main body of China's current political participation, especially in the future, and it is an important part of the modernization of national governance. This study mainly examine the current situation of college students' network political participation through the investigation of the basic situation of the network political participation, network channels, participation problems, influencing factors and other dimension.

This research adopts the author's self compiled questionnaire to collect the data, which named "Questionnaire on the Internet Political Participation of college students in the Internet Age". The contents of questionnaire included the gender, nationality, grade, professional category, political affiliation, father/mother's job type, family income, internet channels, political attention and speech, network media management, network voting, network political surveillance, network political participation quality etc.

This study randomly selected college students as sample from Tsinghua University (Beijing), China University of Mining and Technology (Beijing), China University of Geosciences (Beijing), Beijing Language and Culture University, Beijing University of Science and Technology, China Agricultural University, China University of Political Science and Law, and Beijing Forestry University. A total of 600 questionnaires were issued and 591 valid questionnaires were recovered. The effective recovery rate was 98.5%. Then we used SPSS to analyze the data.

## II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF NETWORK POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS BORN IN 1990S

### A. *More Network Political Participation Channel*

The increasingly developed network provides more and more variety of channels of the political participation for the college students. The survey found that 39.7% of the students through micro-blog or WeChat, 29.6% through network forums, blogs, news thread, 20.5% through QQ or MSN, 10.2% by participating in network surveys and polls to attend their network political participation. They use these channels to express their political position, political will and political views.

### B. *Leading by the Opinion Leaders*

During the internet era, opinion leaders usually actively express their sound on a topic by micro-blog, WeChat and other network media so that they will create a network of public opinion field. Generally speaking, college students pay attention to current affairs, concern about state affairs, and have the potential of political participation. But because of their own limitations, their sense of responsibility is not mature. College students are easy to accept new things, but their ability of independent thinking and independent judgment is weak. College students usually live together as a group, which is strong in conformity with others' opinions. The survey results show that more than 60% college students in the view of an event is vulnerable to be impacted by the surrounding student cadres or the network active molecules. In this way, the ideal feelings of College Students' network behavior may be affected by the opinion leaders, or even be manipulated. Their political opinions and political actions will be led by the opinion leaders.

### C. *Instant Participation Model*

Mobile internet has contributed to the great change from "the people going with the net" to "the net going with the people". Mobile internet has deeply influenced and changed the political participation of college students in the network, so that it can get rid of the limitation of time and area. The survey shows that 97.12% of college students are in the use of smart phones, 94.24% of college students are using mobile phone for more than 2 hours per day, 91.5% of college students daily use mobile phone to browse internet news. That is to say, as long as there are intermittent leisure, as long as they are willing, college students can conveniently take out the mobile phone to surfing on the internet, and participate in a variety of network political activities.

### D. *Limited Participation Validity*

The most direct way of network political participation of college students is through the government website. The results show that only 14.5% of college students often browse the information in the government website and actively participate in network opinion polls, and still 37% of the students have not been on the government's web portal. The interview also find out that many of the students who visited the government website think the information in the government websites are rarely, the information updates are

not timely, and gradually reduce to browse, just retain some policy information or office telephone access. At the same time, 71.3% of college students reflect that their political participation through the micro-blog and other ways is basically no response. Obviously, the frequency and response rate of college students through the network means to interact with the government is still very low.

## III. THE REASONS FOR THE LOW VALIDITY OF NETWORK POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS BORN IN 1990S

### A. *Unsoundness of the Legal System and Institution Relating to the Internet*

Firstly, the construction of the institutional network channels of political participation is still backward at present. More than 80% of the college students born in 1990s haven't made it clear whether there are the relevant institutional network channels of political participation, which makes their randomness and aimlessness highlighted during the political participation network. Secondly, the law about political participation network still remain unsound. As many as 55.72% of the college students born in 1990s only know that "Decree of Government Information Openness" has regulated the boundary of the relevant subjects' right and responsibility, which makes them mix up the rights and obligations of the network political participation and may cause their network political participation of apathy or out-of-control participation.

### B. *Lack of Standardization of Governmental Network Platform's Construction and Services*

The current construction of governmental network platform is still lack of complete satisfaction. According to the General Report on Performance Evaluation of Chinese Government Websites in 2014, all average score of the websites of ministries and commissions in 2014 just remark 55.95. And there still are eight of which (accounting for 14% of the number of all the sites) whose scores less than 40<sup>[3]</sup>. The effect of the on-line exchange interaction is not prominent and so on, all of these above show the construction of the central government ministries websites are underdeveloped on the whole. For example, the governmental information disclosure has a degree of selectivity or avoidance, its content construction hasn't updated in time, its service procedures hasn't been transparent, and its network supervise is lack of sincerity, etc. All of these obviously make against the college students to take part in the network political activities rationally by governmental websites.

### C. *Disorder Caused by the Network and Its Informational Collaboration Technology*

Firstly, it is easy for informational collaboration recommendation technology to make the concentration of the same kind of information in similar groups, which causes the homogeneity of information when the college students search information on the internet. what's more, it is easy to built the formation of "group polarization" and weaken the

Careful self-questioning and the dialectic consideration. Secondly, the anonymous network behaviors reduce the college students' consciousness of responsibility, which may cause some students abandon self-discipline and publish irresponsible views on the internet, even some false allegations. As the survey released, 41.65% of the college students have great randomness when publishing opinions on the internet and the thought at that moment is emotional.

#### D. One-sidedness of Family Education

The study has found that the status of a family's income is up to whether they publish web news commentary. 35.5% of the students whose families' income is low than 4999 yuan will publish web news commentary, while 64.5% of the students from such families won't. In those families earning between 5000 and 9999 per month, 57.7% of the students will while the 42.3% won't. And in those families earning beyond 10000 per month, 39% will while 61% won't. However, almost all the Chinese families including the middle-income families haven't generally cultivated the political personality of the young generation. It is related to two main disadvantages. First, most parents pay much attention to their children's test scores, but relatively absent on their children's behavior habits, moral characters and political knowledge, especially ignore the development of children's sound personality. It makes most students short of necessary political consciousness. Second, the families' political literacy is not enough. With reform and opening up, some parents' cognition begin to get secular, money oriented, material, interest-driven, which makes the young generation lack the family environment where they can form correct political perception.

#### E. Hysteresis of the Development of College Students' Political Quality

The college students' own situation has a key influence on their network political participation. Taking the political affiliation of the college students' network political commentary participation as an example, the study has found that the students with the status of the Chinese Communist Party members are more likely to participate in the network of political commentary than their peer group (seeing from "Table I"). But as a complete unit, there still remain the following shortages. Firstly, all the students born in 1990s are still in the early period of the development of mind and accumulation of life experience and knowledge, so unavoidable emotionality, randomness or radical nature can lead their network political participation tendency to follow suit or entertainment trend. Secondly, part of the students' abilities of receiving information, information retrieval and using the network are not enough, which result difficulty for them to achieve the necessary level of participating in political events or related demands of the network. Thirdly, students' life is relatively simple, and under the environment of market economy, their sense of social responsibility and public spirit is vulnerable. And they are short of firm ideals and beliefs, so that their awareness and motive of willing to network political participation is not strong.

TABLE I. INTERACTIVE CLASSIFICATION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS' POLITICAL AFFILIATION AND NETWORK POLITICAL COMMENTARY PERFORMANCE

	frequently (%)	occasionally (%)	never (%)
Communist Youth League member	6.67	26.66	66.67
probationary member of Communist Party of China	8.57	65.72	25.71
member of Communist Party of China	17.65	70.59	11.76
general public	7.69	7.69	84.62

#### IV. THOUGHTS ON IMPROVING THE LEVEL OF NETWORK POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS BORN IN 1990S

##### A. To Cultivate the Mainstream Consciousness

First, actively promoting the popularization of the core values, gradually internalizing to college students' belief system, behavior rules, ethics of social reality of the moral and political culture together to set nodes in the network world, and turning them into action based on the network space and realizing the integration of network political culture<sup>[4]</sup>. Second, the official should be good at using the internet thinking and internet language to increase its influence among college students<sup>[5]</sup>. They also should actively play an important role in the new media such as micro-blog, WeChat network, making propaganda of political participation, encourage participation, making it an important way to promote political participation, encourage participation and promote political progress.

##### B. To Perfect Interactive System

First, we should establish a more perfect network regulation system so that college students are more aware of their border of rights and responsibilities to use the internet and recognize that some bad network behaviors will harm the harmonious development of the state and society<sup>[6]</sup>. Second, we should improve the depth and speed of the interaction between the government and the public to avoid them affecting by other groups. For their opinions or suggestions, the positive answer and response should be given, and strive to form good interaction situation. Third, we should create a service-oriented government network platform, so that the government can keep abreast of trends in university students' thought and timely answers to their political confusion<sup>[7]</sup>. What's more, students can better understand the political situation to avoid misleading false information. And it will enhance the government's credibility to the students.

##### C. To Optimize the University's Guidance

First, it should strengthen the political participation theory education, give full play to the role of the main channel of ideological and political theory in the classroom, spread the correct network political participation theory knowledge, and cultivate the political quality of college students born in 1990s. Second, it is to actively encourage college students to participate in various activities of students and community, and guide them to carry out grassroots

culture and education activities to increase their political and social experience<sup>[8]</sup>. Third, it is good to improve the discriminative ability of college students' political and theoretical knowledge to guide their use of classroom learning, and then promote their network political participation in order.

#### D. To Advocate Family Democracy

First of all, to cultivate children's political interest. Parents should obtain political information and discuss some of the hot political issues with his children to mobilize the enthusiasm of college students in the network of political participation and improve their ability to analyze the political information<sup>[9]</sup>. Secondly, to set up the correct political view. Parents should take the theory of ideals and faith, combined with China's current social conditions, the dialectical analysis of the political phenomenon at home and abroad, and not be swayed by a few people or organizations in society thought and vulgar, and set a good example for their children. Finally, to master the operation of network practice. Parents should master the network practice skills, be good at obtaining political information by the network and guide orderly political participation in the internet<sup>[10]</sup>

#### E. To Strengthen Students' Self-education

First, to improve their political accomplishment and moral qualities. The survey found out that students published commentary network enthusiasm influenced by the specialty categories. Among them, 75% students who major in political science or history, 72.73% who major in Arts, 43.75% who major in management or economics, 22.69% who major in science or engineering usually express their views. Visibly, political and cultural knowledge is the premise of college students' network political participation consciousness and the realization of network self-discipline. On the one hand, students should take the initiative to strengthen the study of political theory; on the other hand, they own should strive to improve the ability of self education and self management, consciously improve their own quality, strengthen moral consciousness, clear network etiquette. Secondly, to improve their political participation ability. Students themselves should actively participate in school activities and extracurricular caucus of social practice, to play their own potential in the reality of the political practice, political theory and the ability of political participation to solve problems.

### V. CONCLUSION

The research shows that the current network political participation of college students born in 1990s in Beijing's university presents four main features. These characteristics determine that it is pluralistic about the network political participation of the college students born in 1990s, but also reflects that it is limited to their current political participation. In order to effectively promote college students' network political participation, it is necessary to coordinate the social, government, school, family and college students to promote their orderly network political participation. The society should cultivate the mainstream awareness and create a

positive network political and cultural soft power. The government should promote the internet legislation, and create a service-oriented network of government platform to improve the credibility of the government network. The universities should strengthen the education of students' political participation and encourage them to participate in political practice, so as to improve the guiding force of political participation. The parents should establish a correct political view and improve their own network application level in order to strengthen the family atmosphere of infection. College students should have a sense of social responsibility and constantly to improve their political and moral quality and political participation ability. Through these efforts, the network political participation of college students will become more active, and then promote China's social development.

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