

Study on the Role of Virtual Cyberspace in Overcoming Inferiority Complex of College Students

A Case Analysis Based on Live Broadcast Platform Momo

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ABSTRACT

College students with inferiority complex are often faced with such problems as negative emotional state, inability to accept themselves, hesitation in behavior, and poor interpersonal communication. Through virtual cyberspace, they can gain "new feedback", obtain psychological compensation, show their talents, stimulate their passion for life, and acquire interpersonal wisdom to facilitate the communication in reality. A favorable environment for personality transformation requires the reinforcement of network governance, the creation of a cyberspace featuring transparency, the emphasis on education guidance, the promotion of the harmony of virtual self and real self, the construction of online psychological consultation platform, and the elimination of negative psychology generated in virtual space.

Keywords: Virtual cyberspace, College students, Inferiority complex, Transformation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Virtual cyberspace is mistakenly regarded by many people as "electronic parasites", symbol of killing time, indulging in entertainment, or gaming territory. In fact, it enjoys many positive functions, such as the birth of new professions, and providing another way for the existence and development of social citizens. What's more, it benefits people with inferiority complex. Taking student Y's experience in improving inferiority personality after working on a live streaming platform in China as an example, the author analyzed the specific performance of virtual network space in facilitating such transformation, and proposed several measures for the construction of external favorable environment, in the hope that this paper can start further research on positive function of virtual cyberspace.

2. CASE INTRODUCTION: TYPICAL PERFORMANCE OF COLLEGE STUDENT Y WITH INFERIORITY COMPLEX IN LIFE

Y, female, 19 years old, from Chenzhou, Hunan, is a five-year college student majoring in accounting in a vocational college in Hunan Province. Though pretty-looking, she is short in stature, with poor grades, normal family background, and introverted personality. According to the author's observation, Y has severe inferiority complex, and her abnormal psychology and behavior greatly undermine her college life. The details are as follows:

2.1 Negative Emotional State

People with a strong sense of inferiority always excessively belittle or deny themselves. Sentences including "I can't do it", "The exam is coming soon. I guess I'll fail again this time" are their pet phrases. Sigh and moan is no exception. Student Y is actually such a person. Communication with her during break reveals that she was worried about failing not only professional course, but also

innovation and entrepreneurship education course taught by the author. She made herself nervous and worried by asking questions about how and when the course was being tested and how difficult it was.

2.2 Inability to Accept Themselves

"Self-acceptance" is a benign psychological hint produced by individuals based on their appreciation of various aspects of themselves, as well as a positive emotional experience process.¹ Specifically, the higher a person's self-acceptance, the more opportunities for self-affirmation, accompanied by happy emotional experiences. Otherwise, if a person has a low level of self-acceptance, he or she will often be in denial and in low spirits. As a result, he or she will be less likely to succeed, not to mention the courage to create a favorable self-image. Student Y with low degree of self-acceptance in life fails to view herself comprehensively and dialectically. She emphasizes her shortcomings (short stature, poor cultural reserve, etc.) over strengths (honest and kind, civilized and polite, not making waves and so on), leading to low sense of self-efficacy, low confidence, and doubts about her own ability.

2.3 Hesitation in Behavior

Different behaviors also reflect people's different psychological states. People who are optimistic and confident often make people feel positive energy through their actions. On the contrary, people with low self-esteem are reserved, indifferent, and even evasive and hesitant. Y was not active enough in behavior due to inferiority. The Innovation and Entrepreneurship Education course taught by the author covers a practice course of "College students' speech on innovation and entrepreneurship" every semester. All members of Y's group asked her to give a lecture on stage as representative, but Y still resolutely refused, which led to her loss of the opportunity to get on stage. In short, not only are people with low self-esteem not "giants in talk", but they are also "dwarfs in action", always holding back when the chips are down.

2.4 Poor Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication, an important aspect of campus life for college students, exerts

huge influence on life quality, learning efficiency, mental health and other aspects of college students. However, people with low self-esteem tend to be very formal and timid when interacting with others. They are always "other-centered", care about others' "views", dare not reveal their own heart, worried that their words and deeds will discomfort others. Therefore, they are more passive and sensitive in communication, not a fan of group activities, and afraid of being rejected or looked down upon. Y is a typical example. She found that she was quite different from others in study, dress and family, and often kept a certain distance from them. She was immersed in self-doubt and denial, thus giving rise to a severer sense of inferiority, which will in turn undergo vicious circle, further hamstringing her study and interpersonal communication, making her self-denial, self-isolation, and prone to personality disorders.

3. THE ROLE OF VIRTUAL SPACE: SUBLIMATING AND CHANNELING THE FRUSTRATION IN REALITY, OBTAINING SATISFACTION FROM OTHERS' APPROVAL, AND ADJUSTING MENTALITY TO ACHIEVE INNER BALANCE

The analysis of the above four aspects reveals that Y enjoys typical self-abased personality. However, her behavior has changed to some extent since she came back from one-semester internship in her junior year, which is quite different from that of last semester. Therefore, the author, as part-time head teacher of the accounting class, had in-depth exchanges with her for many times and learned that she worked as an intern accountant in a private enterprise in Chenzhou, Hunan, and then served as a cashier in a 4S shop. Finally, she was introduced by relatives to a cultural media company in Chenzhou as network anchor. According to her, popular anchors can be recommended to live on big platforms like Momo. Now, she has been broadcasting live on Momo for more than two months. Not only does she earn more than her previous job as accountant and cashier, but her job is much easier. The key is that she feels happy and valuable in her job, and makes some friends through online platform. The conversations with her made the author realize that the opinion held by many people taking virtual cyberspace as a synonym for killing time, game addiction, non-mainstream culture is biased. Virtual cyberspace

¹ Ma Yanli. The Enlightenment of Informed Action on Teenagers' Personality Cultivation [J]. The School Party Construction and Ideological Education. 2009 (3): 69-70.

not only has given rise to new professionals (including network anchor), but also offer another approach for social citizen's existence and development. In addition, it helps people with inferiority complex to sublimate and ease frustration in reality, obtain satisfaction through the recognition of others to adjust their mentality, thus achieve inner balance. Only in this way can they get rid of self-abasement, and cultivate a healthy, positive and optimistic psychological character.

3.1 The "Feedback" in Virtual New Environment Helps People with Self-abasement Personality Update Others' Established Evaluation and Obtain Psychological Compensation

Psychologist John Currie once pointed out that "the evaluation of others is a mirror of self-evaluation". Social psychologist Festinger held that "a person's understanding of his own value is realized by comparing with the abilities and conditions of others".² Due to the limitation and inequality of social opportunities, as well as the differences of individual life characteristics and natural endowments, the growth process of human beings is actually a process full of setbacks. Given that an individual has been living in the original environment for a long time and people have a better understanding of his strengths and weaknesses, the established evaluation of him, or stereotype, is gradually formed. People living in the original environment are often restricted by the "shackles" of established evaluation. When they succeed, they will lose self-motivation, expectation and passion for future, suffering from "transcendence aphasia" (by Maslow), and when they fail, they will fall into the "mire" of pain because of the "views" of other people. The virtual cyberspace provides a new "platform" for people who have failed temporarily to cushion frustration and pain. As for people with inferiority complex (such as Y, Xiang Xiang, an Internet singer, etc.), online virtual space allows an opportunity to update others' established evaluation, and the "new evaluation" from online interpersonal communication endows them with a virtual sense of satisfaction and comfort, so as to adjust their mentality and achieve inner balance. Y said there were three to four hundred fans watching her live broadcast, sometimes as many as one thousand.

² Su Guohong. Virtual Self and Mental Health [J]. Journal of Anqing Teachers College (Social Science Edition). 2002 (3): 86-88.

Many fans said she was cute, attractive and classy, wanted her contact information and made friends with her, a far cry from the comments she received at university. She realized her advantages and gained a sense of presence, so she would broadcast earlier every day and was sometimes happy to extend the broadcast to reply to fans' questions.

3.2 The Independence and Autonomy of Virtual Space Provide a Platform to Show Talent and Inspire Passion for Life

In real life, due to the constraints of objective conditions such as working conditions, social roles and social background, people's talent and personality can only be displayed at a specific level. Some people enjoys small circles and extremely low self-esteem. Long-term personality suppression and talent waste not only prejudice their all-round development, but also affect their mental health in serious cases. Network, a virtual platform for symbol transmission and information sharing, realizes the sharing of information. Such virtual platform allows relationship between people return to a state featuring equal footing and freedom, where identity, status, and past are virtualized. The communication between people is actually that between "roles". People can abandon the role and mentality shaped and restricted by the established social life in reality, and experience a variety of different ways of existence with virtual identity.³ As a result, Internet users can "gallop" in cyberspace through "virtual self". People with inferiority complex can break the existing limitations of space and time, and independently show themselves and display individuality via the characteristics of cyberspace (such as virtuality, equality and interactivity). Y told the author that anchors can be classified into several camps, including anchors with beauty or talent, outdoor anchors, anchors for awkward chat, etc. At present, Y is mainly employed as a talent anchor. Her talent is cucurbit flute, which benefits from her music background and the short-term training for Internet celebrity after she came to the company. In a word, Y showed her talent that she seldom showed in front of the public through the platform, and won the favor of a lot of fans. After each song, there will be "yacht", "mua", even "rocket" gifted by local lord. When she talks about the virtual gifts she

³ Su Guohong. Virtual Self and Mental Health [J]. Journal of Anqing Teachers College (Social Science Edition). 2002 (3): 86-88.

receives, she is so excited that her previously worried look is gone and she is "bursting with happiness".

3.3 The Interaction of Virtual Society Imparts the Wisdom of Interpersonal Communication and Facilitates Actual Communication

The rapid development of mobile Internet technology makes the Internet another spatial form of human life — online society. At present, the shaping and improvement of individual personality is more and more dependent on the combination of offline society and online society. In 2009, Valkenburg et al. proposed the hypothesis that Internet enhances self-openness, believing that virtual social relations enhance college students' self-exploration, improve interpersonal relations, and promote the positive development of personal identity.⁴ The conversation between the author and Y proves such saying. When asked whether she has made new friends through live broadcasting, Y replied: "I have made plenty of friends on the platform, especially those who entered the studio through the "near" button on Momo, and I met some of them in real life. Anyway, I communicated with different people on the platform, got to know the characteristics of people involving different professions and the interests and hobbies of people of different ages, learned a lot of communication skills, and became more courageous than before. Now I don't have so much scruples in communicating with others." As is known to all, interpersonal communication in real life is restricted and affected by space, time, objects and other factors, but also interfered by social stereotypes of labeling, stereotyping and dogmatization, which all make real communication more difficult. The interaction of online society can break the limitation of time, space and objects, and the individuality neglected in real social interaction can also be liberated. People can express their personal demands and show their own characteristics by means of various ways, presenting "physical self, psychological self, realistic self and virtual self" in an all-round and multi-angle way, which both promotes multiple exploration of the self to construct the identity, and endows more interpersonal communication wisdom to facilitate actual communication.

⁴ Xu Jingying, Wu Fang. The development of university students' identity in virtual social relations [J]. *China Adult Education*, 2014 (24): 61-63.

4. CASE REFLECTION: CONSTRUCTING A FAVORABLE PERSONALITY ENHANCEMENT ENVIRONMENT FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS BASED ON INTERNET COMMUNICATION ECOLOGY

The above analysis shows that Y, thanks to virtual space, is stepping out from the shadow of typical self-abased personality. However, there is no doubt that network boasts both positive and negative effects and functions. Network virtual space can correct self-abased personality to a certain extent, especially professional psychologists employed for psychological correction of such patients, and there are many successful examples. However, to person with poor self-control, virtual cyberspace also may cause the following problem: the contrast between the virtual self and the real self is so great that they cannot be unified, which leads to schizophrenia in serious conditions; excessive self-pity, self-righteousness, etc.; indulging in visual world, escaping from real life, and the loss of courage and ability to face reality. To reduce negative impact of virtual space on mass with inferiority complex such as Y, the following measures should be taken to optimize the Internet communication ecology from external social support system and construct a favorable personality correction environment for college students.

4.1 Strengthening Network Governance to Create a Cyberspace Featuring Transparency

Comrade Xi Jinping pointed out in his speech at the forum on cyber security and informatization that holding the attitude of responsibility for society and people, it's necessary to strengthen cyberspace governance in accordance with the law, improve the construction of online content, focus on positive online publicity, and cultivate positive healthy, upward-oriented network culture. The core socialist values and outstanding achievements of human civilization should be adopted to nourish the hearts of people and society, and the positive energy and high theme should be guaranteed to create a cyberspace featuring transparency and clean governance for Internet users, especially young people.⁵ At present, with the rise of web celebrity economy, live streaming platforms are on the rise.

⁵ Xi Jinping. Xi Jinping's speech at the forum on cyber security and informatization [N]. *People's Daily*, 2016-4-26 (2).

Even large live streaming platforms such as Douyu, Huya, Momo, Zhanqi, Huajiao and Panda have been exposed with many problems. The dissemination of illegal information is included. In order to get more followers, some anchors tried every tricks, such as the demonstration of virus generation, swallowing live goldfish, grave robbing in ancient times, various ways to die in ancient and present time, all of which violate public order and good customs and undermines social morals. What's worse, these behaviors actually abet and help others to commit crimes. If the behaviors seriously harm society, they may also violate the criminal law and constitute a crime. According to a statement posted on the official website of Office of the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission on February 13, 2018, Cyberspace Administration of China, together with the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, will shut down 10 illegal live-streaming platforms, including Mizhi, based on *Provisions for the Administration of Internet News Information Services*, *Cyber Security Law*, and *Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC)*. "Tianyou" and other anchors were blacklisted, and live streaming platforms were required to forbid them from registering live streaming accounts again. In recent days, a total of 1,401 accounts of anchors with serious violations have been banned from major live streaming platforms, more than 5,400 live-broadcasting studios have been closed, and 370,000 short videos have been deleted. Therefore, network management must be strengthened, and efforts should be intensified to crack down on violations of laws and regulations in online live broadcasting, streaming platforms and anchors should be guided to spread positive energy, promote socialist core values, and the order of network communication should be maintained to create cyberspace featuring transparency and clean governance, and shape favorable virtual environment for the youth to act in a civilized manner, and for college students with inferiority complex.

4.2 The Emphasis on Education Guidance to Promote the Harmony of Virtual Self and Real Self

In real life, the education and guidance of college students with self-abasement personality should be strengthened to promote the harmony and unity between virtual self and real self, and to prevent severe personality division and even schizophrenia resulting from huge contrast between virtual self and real self. The first is to strengthen

the education of the identity unity between virtual self and real self. "Virtual self refers to a virtual subject that exists and is recognized in virtual space, as well as its living mode, existence state, psychological phenomenon and psychological experience. Virtual self is the existence state and expression form of real self in virtual space."⁶ The educatee should understand that the moment the virtual self comes out from the virtual world, it will be transformed into the real self, and it should assume and perform one or more different roles and identities, and must abide by the legal norms, moral ethics and customs in real life. Therefore, whether the roles of virtual self and real self can be transformed smoothly is an important criterion to prove whether the real self is trapped in cyberspace. The second is that network relationship should be the "positive extension" of real relationship, and the virtual world should be consistent with the norms, morals and emotional expression patterns of real life. In other words, the virtual self in virtual world must also follow the legal norms and moral ethics of the virtual cyberspace and fulfill the obligations and responsibilities of the online society. The third is to take a variety of ways to divert attention of the educatee, so that they can "get in" and "get out" at the same time, restrain their emphasis on virtual practice of virtual self over social practice of real self. The Marxist view holds that practice is the way of human existence and that social life is essentially practical. Therefore, the social practice of real self should be valued to help the educatee to learn interpersonal communication in social practice, show their own talent, achieve self-acceptance, and develop positive personality. At the same time, it's necessary to improve home-school communication mechanism, make use of the peer group effect, strengthen the guidance room (psychological counseling room) for the development of students, organize various recreational activities, encourage students to participate in self-management, and help students with self-abasement personality get out of the network, return to reality, find confidence, and transform their personality.

⁶ Xie Jun. The Ultimate End: The Virtual Ego Have To Go Back To Reality And Achieve Harmony [J]. *Journal of Xinyang Teachers College (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*. 2011 (5): 8-12.

4.3 The Construction of Online Psychological Consultation Platform to Cushion Negative Psychology Generated in Virtual Space

While gaining positive effects in the virtual space, college students with low self-esteem, such as Y, are also suffering from negative effects in network information communication and contradictions and frictions in virtual interpersonal communication, which directly bring them a lot of psychological pressure. Some scholars call it "virtual frustration". Everyone in virtual space has unrestrained choice, which leads to the uncertainty and arbitrariness of the virtual relationship. There also exist virtual setbacks and injuries, some people with attachment to virtual life will experience virtual frustration as their virtual self are not satisfied or realized.⁷ Therefore, it is necessary to eliminate the influence of virtual frustration in time. The author's conversation with Y shows that students with psychological problems in universities are reluctant to ask for help in psychological consultation room, which is largely explained by pathomeiosis. They are afraid that their classmates and teachers will know. Therefore, the author holds that it is necessary to further strengthen the construction of online psychological consultation platform, as anonymity of the platform can better protect patients' privacy, and patients can feel free to expose their psychological problems on the Internet. The report on the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) clearly states that it's a must to strengthen the system of social and psychological services, and foster a sense of self-respect, self-confidence, rationality, peace, and positive social attitudes. Therefore, it is imperative to strengthen the construction of online psychological counseling platform, timely resolve setbacks encountered by college students with inferiority complex, and transform their original characters, so as to cultivate the psychological character featuring self-esteem, self-confidence, health, positive and optimistic.

5. CONCLUSION

Virtual cyberspace can help people with low self-esteem to some extent. The concrete manifestation of such role should be clarified, and the external social support system should be

strengthened to optimize the Internet communication ecology, so as to construct a favorable personality correction environment for college students. In this way, the network can better play its role in educating students and contribute to the healthy life and growth of college students in the new era.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Xiang'e Zhou.

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⁷ Su Guohong. Virtual Self and Mental Health [J]. *Journal of Anqing Teachers College (Social Science Edition)*. 2002 (3): 86-88.