Research on the Attitudes of Weibo Network Violence Participants on Reversal Events of News —Taking China Jiangsu Cake Shop Event for Example

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Abstract. In the era of omnimedia, the online world has formed a new public opinion field where the public expresses their opinions and emotion, accompanied by constant development and evolution of social media, and then, cyber bullying has increased exponentially. Public attitudes towards reversal events news and cyber bullying in the era of omnimedia are deeply explored and analyzed according to the research on typical cases of cyber bullying—"The China Jiangsu Cake Shop Event" in the paper. This event has undergone a process of emergence, fermentation, condemnation, reversal, and sustained cyber bullying, and some netizens played the role of internet violators in this public opinion event. Weibo internet violence participants are interviewed and sampled through semi-structured interviews to study their thinking habits, thinking ways, and behavioral patterns when dealing with online events. Meanwhile, theoretical assumptions about the causes of their behavior are proposed through summarization, so as to further explore the intervention and handling methods of cyber bullying from the perspective of psychological influencing factors.

Keywords: News Reversal; Cyber Bullying; Weibo Cyber Bullying Participant; Psychological Portrait.

1. Introduction

With the rapid development and popularization of social media, the appearance of news reversal has increasingly increased. Reverse news refers to the operation of intentional or unintentional distortion, reversal, or exaggeration on originally true events or facts, and the phenomenon of rapid dissemination, confusing the public, challenging information reliability, and leading to public opinion confusion through social media platform [1]. On the morning of May 29th, 2003, a video titled "three-year-old girl sexually assaulted" is spread crazily online. A mother holding her ID card complained to netizens about her daughter's redness and swelling genital, resulting and anal fissure caused by sexual assault by cake shop owners. Once the video is sent online, cake shop owner and their relatives have been subjected to numerous cyber bullying by netizens, and the phone of the cake shop owner has also been bombed by the violator. The online comments are all insults and threats against the cake shop owner, including a series of insulting comments. The cake shop cannot operate normally as a result. The slander of that mother caused mental and material harm on cake shop owner's family. In July 11, 2023, Wuxi police issued a police notice providing the latest progress of the event, and the video quickly rushed to the first place of the hot search after the TikTok video was sent out, which was liked by over 710000 people and forwarded by more than 71347000 people. After a professional examination of the girl's body by the police, the police conducted frame by frame playback of a total monitoring period of 620 hours from March 20th to March 28th, visited 52 relevant people, inquired cake shop owner Tang for multiple times, and conducted a comprehensive survey on his travel records, surrounding monitoring, and related electronic data between March 20th and March 28th. After investigation, red and swollen lower body in girls is considered villitis in young children, and the surveillance video has not been deleted. Moreover, Tang has sufficient alibi during this period, so the investigation by the public security organs found that the three-year-old girl had not been sexually assaulted, and Tang was not suspected of committing a crime.

However, with the passage of time, the popularity of online public opinion criticism has not decreased. In July 12th, Tang, the owner of the cake shop involved in the event, accepted an interview with the internet media City Link. In the interview, he stated that despite there is a police investigation reports, some netizens who do not know the truth are still concerned about the ongoing harassment of him. The event continues to have an impact on his life, with a human flesh search on by some netizens. From time to time, someone sent him abusive text messages, or some wreath props or posts malicious threats to his social media account, such as WeChat or Weibo.

This cake shop reversal event news reflects the increasing number of participants in the cyber bullying. In the China Jiangsu cake shop event, netizens abused the freedom of online public opinion and made insulting and offensive remarks towards parties involved in news events as judges from a moral standpoint. Even in the midst of intense emotions, impulsive and explosive offline conflicts, a large number of negative comments received, deeply trapped in public opinion cyber bullying and suffering from massive cyber bullying caused a vicious impact on his work and life. One of the more noteworthy points is how can an objective news event trigger a wave of public opinion in a short period of time and trigger large-scale cyber bullying? How do the participants and perpetrators of cyber bullying in the event commit this mass “mediocre evil”? How do they view their behavior?

2. Literature Review

In terms of current research data at home and abroad, the form of formation, impact, and governance strategy have always been a hot topic of discussion and attention in mainstream society for the topic of “cyber bullying”. At present, there is no specific definition of cyber bullying at the official level, and several mainstream viewpoints hold that cyber bullying refers to individuals or groups consciously spreading through the internet, illegal and criminal behaviors that repeatedly and persistently infringe upon a specific candidate’s legitimate rights and interests such as reputation and privacy [2], and a group behavior in which the perpetrator maliciously attacks or maliciously discloses the privacy of others by using photographs and words and actions such as cursing, insulting, defaming, etc. on the internet, causing substantial harm to the legitimate rights and interests of the parties involved [3] .Wen argues that online violence refers to the use of aggressive language to engage in negative behavior towards individuals involved in a particular event, resulting in mental and material harm [4]. Some scholars believe that although cyber bullying is different from real-life violence, it is an extension of real violence, as a typical action of violence [5]. Some researchers have summarized the definition of cyber bullying based on different academic backgrounds. Li Yuqi proposed that “In the field of journalism and communication, most scholars believe that cyber bullying is online public opinion violence; In the field of law, most scholars define cyber bullying as a form of infringement; In the field of public management, most scholars believe that cyber bullying is a form of network misconduct” [6]. Regarding the governance of online violence, researchers often propose using institutional mechanisms for constraint. For instance, Gallardo, Kristine suggested the reduction and suppression of online violence through the enactment of a "Code of Communication Etiquette" [7]. However, the research direction and achievements on cyber bullying usually focus on the governance path, difficulties, and response strategies of cyber bullying in current research, and there are no in-depth and detailed research materials for the behavioral patterns and ideas of online abusers. The author believes that clarifying the behavioral patterns and ideas of online abusers is more helpful in proposing targeted and specific governance paths and response strategies, avoiding research toward generalizations. This article aims to collect cyber bullying comments and psychological activities from Weibo cyber bullying participants by studying typical cases of cyber bullying (taking the China Jiangsu cake shop event on Weibo as an example), so as to further conduct anatomic analysis and interpretation for psychological activity, depict a group portrait of participants of cyber bullying on Weibo, and sort out and propose theoretical assumptions about the causes of their behavior. Thus, the intervention and handling methods of cyber bullying are explored from the perspective of psychological influencing factors.

3. Methodology

Qualitative research refers to a method of studying the internal laws of events, emphasizing a deep understanding of the event and respect the observed person's explanation of their behavior [8]. Common qualitative research methods include group discussions, one-on-one in-depth interviews, etc. In in-depth interviews, there are three types of methods, including "structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and non-structured interviews" according to the standardization level of interviews [9]. In this study, the author obtained first-hand information from participants in Weibo cyber bullying (hereinafter referred to as Weibo cyber bullying participants) through semi-structured interviews. The advantage is that the questions can be flexibly adjusted based on the actual situation of the interview, helpful to extract information from respondents' responses and obtaining clues to continue questioning, so as to collect more objective factual materials [10, 11].

According to the story of China Jiangsu cake shop event, the author has preset 15 interview questions in advance (including 9 open questions and 6 closed questions). From August 4th to August 11th, 2023, a conversation with 20 participants in the Weibo cyber bullying in the cake shop event in Jiangsu, China has been conducted through a combination of online questionnaires and offline interviews. After obtaining their consents, the obtained interview recordings and transcripts were organized, summarized and analyzed. A total of 20 interview transcripts and 2 interview recordings were collected this time (the interview recordings have been converted into written materials). To protect the privacy of respondents, their names will be hidden in subsequent articles, and the use of their surname initials, gender, and age for substitution will be unified (such as "A male, 20 years old"). In addition, according to the confidentiality statement signed with the interviewees, the interview materials will not be disclosed in any form except for those that can be explained and used in this article

The subjects interviewed this time are mainly between the ages of 20-25 (only 4 interviewees are over 25 years old), with 9 females and 11 males. Multiple Weibo negative reviews or multiple forwarding of offensive and abusive event comments were posted in this cyber bullying event (with an average of 3 or more). This study aims to analyze first-hand data on the self-statement of this group to explore how respondents convert themselves from a original "justice oriented" critic to participants in Weibo cyber bullying unconsciously. This study focuses more on the self-analysis and opinion expression of "Weibo abusers", only summarizing and analyzing the understanding and definition of Weibo abusers' respective words and behaviors, so as to strive for fairness and objectivity without subjectively denying or criticizing on their views

4. Result

After this interview and statistics on the participants of cyber bullying, the attitudes of cyber bullying participants towards news reversal can be divided into the following three main attitudes: 1. It doesn't matter to me; 2. Believe oneself to speak out for 'justice'; 3. Feel guilty and regretful.

4.1. It Doesn't Matter to Me

According to the investigation conducted in this interview, some people believe that the harm caused to the victim by publishing cyber bullying comments is not related to him, and these people are not concerned about whether their comments will harm others after the news reversal.

4.2. Believe Oneself to Speak out for 'Justice'

According to the investigation of this interview, it is found that some people defamed and insulted the cake shop owner before the truth was revealed. While after the truth was revealed, they did not apologize to the cake shop owner timely, and blamed the entire cause of cyber bullying on unscrupulous media and girl mothers instead. Moreover, they used the phrase 'sense of justice' to clarify their previous online abuse comments. A 21-year-old woman's view of the news reversal is that he is not bad. If news media can broadcast the correct news without misleading others, there will

be no cyber bullying. Bad people can be punished, and these righteous people have room to play, so as not to implicate innocent people.

4.3. Feel Guilty and Regretful

According to the investigation conducted in this interview, it is found that some people defamed and insulted the cake shop owner before the truth was revealed. After the truth was revealed, they promptly apologized to the cake shop owner and expressed regret for their previous behavior. A 24-year-old man's view on the news reversal was that he was also misled and would not believe or spread rumors when seeing such things. This type of cyber bullying is irreparable to the physical and mental health of the victims. It is strictly demanded that you no longer participate in cyber bullying and apologize to the cake shop owner.

5. Discussion

5.1. The Attitude of Netizens Towards News Reversal is Indifferent, Without My Business

These people may consider that news reversal is not directly related to their own lives and interests. They may believe that they have not been affected by the results of the news reversal, and speak online as a way to vent their emotions. They never pay attention to the impact of their words on others, so they hold a indifferent attitude towards it. The things done by these people seem little, with tapping the keyboard and moving their fingers, but malicious views and polarized rhetoric are put online, which is seemed insignificant but actually violate the victim's privacy and reputation rights. Furthermore, severe cases can cause harm to the victim's mentality. In the future, more and more people will participate in cyber bullying, they will all feel that this casual comment is not considered as a cyber bullying and there is no problem. In this article, society should emphasize the impact of news reversal on everyone and the harm caused. People realize that it is not only related to the victims, but also to everyone in society through real cases. People should strengthen their ideological and moral education and broaden their horizons, focusing on themselves and improving their overall situation.

5.2. The Attitude of Netizens Towards News Reversal is that They Believe They are Speaking out for Justice

These people feel that they have a strong sense of justice, and they always like to stand on the moral high ground and criticize others. When they don't understand the truth about things, they will expose people they think they have done wrong. These people are not fond of thinking and tend to follow the trend of media comments. Some people always see themselves as the justice bringers on the internet. Even if they find out that they have made mistakes, they will still be proud and unwilling to admit their mistakes, and then, shirk responsibility and feel misled by comments and media. As more and more people believe that they speak out for justice, this attitude not only has a positive impact, but also comes with a negative impact. Positive impact can cultivate people's sense of justice. The more people with a sense of justice, the better the development of our country will be, but the increasing number of people with such a sense of justice also has a serious negative impact. These righteous envoys are easily exploited by unscrupulous media and used by some bad people as a tool for cyber bullying. This study suggests that social sectors should strengthen the management of online news senders to remove and delete news messages with uncertain information and permanently ban accounts that spread fake news. The people should cultivate a humble character and apologize after knowing they have made a mistake without being too arrogant. Besides, people should brighten your eyes, not rush to comment and make just remarks, and carefully observe and confirm the truth of the news before making comments.

5.3. The Attitude of Netizens Towards News Reversal is Guilty and Regretful

These cyber bullying participants actually meant it well, and they wanted to speak up for the victims, which is only snared by someone with ulterior motives. They feel that their comments have caused serious harm to the true victims mentally and physically. They feel shamefaced for their conscience, so they feel very guilty and regretful from heart, which can prompt netizens to reflect deeply and make these people aware of the harm their actions have caused to others, so as to promote that apologizing to the victims by netizens does not set a good example for others. Secondly, they will be vigilant in carefully distinguishing fake news and not easily spreading uncertain news. People should enhance their sense of responsibility and take responsibility for what they have done. People need to constantly reflect on themselves, and when doing something, they should not immediately do it and repeatedly think about the causes and consequences.

6. Conclusion

Through semi-structured interview, how do participants in cyber bullying on Weibo participate and cause the spread of cyber bullying is explored. The group of participants in Weibo cyber bullying in this study is relatively younger, with teenagers as the main group. Most respondents have a mainstream recognition and perception of cyber bullying — this is an inappropriate behavior, but their emotions are vulnerable to external influences to form a biased understanding. These young participants in cyber bullying do not have a clear understanding of the seriousness and harm caused by improper online speech. Therefore, individuals are often caught up in group cyber bullying without being aware of it. In the case of a cyber bullying, their attitude shows that “it doesn’t matter and it is nothing to do with me”, some people believe that “they speak up for justice”, and some feel guilty and regretful for their actions. They speak casually on the internet, acting as “keyboard warriors”, which perhaps unintentionally or passively. Otherwise, this is just an emotional and emotional release, but often without a clear understanding of the consequences and impacts that may arise, which are easily influenced by emotions or framed by others to become perpetrators of cyberviolence and bring great harm to others and society. By exploring and analyzing the psychological causes of cyber bullying participants, following methods are concluded for avoidance and containment of cyber bullying: Firstly, the network regulatory authorities and network security management departments should strengthen the supervision of online news release and social public opinion, especially for the timely removal and deletion of fake news, fake information, and untrue information and permanent banning of accounts that spread fake news; Secondly, it shall strengthen education and guidance for the vast number of netizens. Society not only needs to speak out for justice and public opinion supervision, but also needs facts, legal concepts, prudence and rationality. As ordinary people, when paying attention to news hotspots and public opinion events, especially those who have not personally experienced them, they should be calm and rational, carefully analyze, and wait for the truth, rather than rushing to judge and draw conclusions; Thirdly, participants shall be encouraged in cyber bullying to engage in profound reflection, and what is true “justice”. By promoting similar cyber bullying events such as the “Jiangsu cake store event”, it should alert netizens to the dangers of fake news and information at all times, strengthen the learning and improvement of legal knowledge and analytical judgment, make clear understanding and judgment, refuse to become a participant and “implementer” of cyber bullying, and maintain a clear online space.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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