

Analysis of the Present Situation and Communication Strategy of New Media Construction in Colleges and Universities

-- Taking the Official WeChat Accounts of 9 Universities in China as an Example

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Abstract. Under the general trend of media integration, college media pay more attention to constructing new media on campus and expanding social influence with the characteristics of educational media. Through sampling survey and text analysis, this paper collects and compares the development status of new educational media in China at different levels of colleges and universities. Problems are found from the perspectives of output and publishing habits of original articles, agenda setting, content production preferences, audience preferences, etc. Meanwhile, we also seek solutions from the aspects of team building, ideological and political education, publicity channels, etc., so as to provide a reference for the educational media in colleges and universities in China to realize a new form of communication with both educational functions and social influences.

Keywords: New Media in Colleges and Universities; WeChat Official Account; Dissemination Effect; Communication Strategy.

1. Introduction

In September 2020, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the Opinions on Accelerating the Development of Media Convergence. Moreover, many plans, instructions, and suggestions focused on media convergence, further indicating the great importance attached by the central government to media convergence. With continuous party and national promotion, China's media integration has entered a new stage. Various kinds of media at all levels from the communist party, government, industry, and education have been fully integrated and the all-media communication matrix has initially taken shape.

Throughout the campus media of colleges and universities, including paper media, audio-visual media, and network new media, etc., the types of media are relatively complete, involving words, images, sounds, videos, etc. with relatively wide communication coverage. As the official public opinion channels, Weibo and WeChat of colleges and universities have become the main way of educational media integration. Compared with professional media and institutional publicity platforms, educational media features social concern, independent operation, wide topic selections, young subjects, and strong interactivity. However, there are also disadvantages such as insufficient extensive social resources and the inability to capture the latest industry trends and media development trends in time.

On February 19, 2016, General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out at the CPC Symposium on News and Public Opinion Work that "Content is always fundamental, and integrated development must adhere to content as the top priority to win development advantages." How to expand the influence of colleges and universities through new educational media to face social concerns and public opinion concerns is an important problem to be solved urgently by campus media. As far as a university is concerned, campus media not only bears vital internal responsibilities such as spreading campus culture, guiding values, and public opinion, but also bears the external responsibilities of publicizing the university's image. When operating new media independently, we should not only firmly grasp the main theme of society and fully play its ideological and political functions for teachers and students, but also insist on content-oriented and technology-supplemented principle, so as to flexibly

present campus high-quality information, consolidate and broaden audience groups, and create an integrated new educational media with diverse purposes.

2. Research Design and Methods

The colleges and universities in this study refer to undergraduate institutions including universities, colleges, and independent colleges, that is, ordinary colleges and universities with undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

The university samples in this study are mainly obtained by random sampling and stratified sampling, covering 9 samples in 3 layers, with Peking University, South China Normal University, and Hubei University as the A layer, Southeast University, Suzhou University, and Zhuhai Institute of Science and Technology as the B layer, and University of Science and Technology of China, Air Force Medical University, and Guangdong Institute of Science and Technology as the C layer.

In this study, by means of the sample survey and content analysis, 2214 original articles published by the official WeChat account of 9 sample universities from January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2021, were sorted out and analyzed. At the same time, according to the monthly article reading list of national colleges and universities published by the official WeChat account of China Youth Daily, 1140 original articles (excluding articles that have been deleted by publishers) in this period are analyzed.

The details are as follows:

(a) Sampling Survey Method

According to the monthly list of official WeChat accounts in the comprehensive influence ranking of national colleges and universities published by China Youth Daily, the author randomly selected 98 universities with perfect data (data records always exist in the 2-year sampling period) and summarized the data of their official WeChat account, such as the number of posts, total readings, headline readings, average readings, total reading recommendations, and total likes.

The formula of the WeChat Communication Index (WCI) published and authorized by China's third-party new media data search engine "Qingbo Intelligence" is as follows:

$$\text{WCI} = \{0.6 * [0.85 \ln (R/d+1) + 0.09 \ln (Z/d*10+1) + 0.06 \ln (L/d*10+1)] + 0.2 * [0.85 \ln (R/n+1) + 0.09 \ln (Z/n*10+1) + 0.06 \ln (L/n*10+1)] + 0.1 * [0.85 \ln (Rt/d+1) + 0.09 \ln (Z_{\max}*10+1)] + 0.1 * [0.85 \ln (Rt/d*10+1) + 0.06 \ln (L_{\max}*10+1)]\}$$

Where d and n are the numbers of days included in the evaluation period and the number of articles sent by the account; R , Z , and L are the total number of readings, reading recommendations, and likes of all articles (n) in the evaluation period; R_t , Z_t , and L_t are their total number of readings, reading recommendations, and likes of headlines in the evaluation period; n_t is their number of headline articles in the evaluation period; $R_{\max}$, $Z_{\max}$, and $L_{\max}$ are their highest number of readings, reading recommendations, and likes of articles in the evaluation period.

The final WCI mean of each university is calculated and sorted. 31 universities with WCI mean ≥ 1000 constitute the first group, 41 universities with WCI mean between 900 and 1000 constitute the second group, and 26 universities with WCI mean between 700 and 900 constitute the third group, which are sorted in descending order according to WCI mean.

In this study, the classification of sample universities refers to the second list of universities and disciplines included in the "double world-class project". Within ordinary universities in China, universities are categorized into "double-world-class" and "non-double-world-class" universities, among which "double-world-class" universities are divided into 985-project and non-985-project universities.

Then, the author selected 985-project universities, non-985-project but "double world-class", and "non-double-world-class" universities with the highest WCI average from groups 1, 2, and 3, forming three samples in one group. Finally, this study is divided into three sampling groups: A, B, and C, with three samples in each group and nine samples in total.

(2) Content Analysis Method

This study classifies the original articles pushed by the official WeChat account of 9 colleges and universities (hereinafter referred to as “university official account”), which are mainly divided into four categories including ideological politics, daily life, school affairs, and stories. “Ideological politics” includes traditional culture, major events, educational activities, the memorial of figures, and school history; “Daily life” includes campus life, campus scenery, university activities, and publicity work; “School affairs” includes classroom teaching, student work, notice and announcement, discipline construction, cooperation and exchange, and scientific research contribution; “Stories” include stories of students, teachers, alumni, and faculties, which are divided into 18 types of articles.

In addition, the author also counts five comprehensive data of official accounts in sample universities, which are ① the proportion of original content, that is, the ratio of the number of articles with the tag “original” to the total number of articles, in order to investigate the output of original articles of university official account; ② the proportion of headline articles, that is, the ratio of the number of headline articles to the total number of articles, in order to investigate the article publish habits of university official account; ③ the proportion of content types to examine the agenda setting and content production preferences of university official account; ④ content types and proportion of “TOP100 Monthly Articles Reading Rankings of National Colleges and Universities”; ⑤ number of original articles of sample colleges and universities on the list to examine audience preferences and social influence.

3. Data Analysis

(1) Output of Original Articles and Articles Publishing Habits of Sampled University Official Account

Table 1. Proportion of Original Content and Headline Articles in Sample Universities (%)

Sampling Group	Sample Universities	The Proportion of Original Content	The Proportion of Headline Articles
A	Peking University	55.10	89.30
	South China Normal University	19.20	99.60
	Hubei University	69.60	98.70
B	Southeast University	16.70	94.40
	Suzhou University	39.70	94.30
	Zhuhai Institute of Science and Technology	43.70	91.40
C	University of Science and Technology of China	15.80	83.50
	Air Force Medical University	1.30	44.70
	Guangdong Institute of Science and Technology	0.80	94.10

In the proportion of original content, there is a wide gap between the sampled university official accounts. Hubei University and Peking University on the A layer as well as Zhuhai Institute of Science and Technology on the B layer have a high proportion of original content, ranging from 40% to 70%; The proportion of original content of Air Force Medical University and Guangdong Institute of Science and Technology in C layer is low, only about 1%.

In terms of the proportion of headline articles, sampled university official accounts mostly adopt the mode that “only publish the official account once with one article”, the proportion generally reaching 90%. South China Normal University and Hubei University on the A layer are as high as

99%, while Air Force Medical University on the C layer uses headlines and sub-headlines evenly, with headlines accounting for the lowest proportion.

(2) Agenda Setting and Content Production Preference of Sampled University Official Accounts

Table 2. Content Types Proportion of Sampled University Official Accounts (%)

Sampling Group	Major Categories Sampled Universities	Ideological Politics	Daily Life	School Affairs	Stories
A	Peking University	20.49	37.24	23.58	18.70
	South China Normal University	3.49	48.84	26.74	20.93
	Hubei University	14.32	37.76	26.76	21.16
B	Southeast University	18.14	64.22	7.35	10.29
	Suzhou University	17.99	54.57	9.15	18.29
	Zhuhai Institute of Science and Technology	9.17	40.40	34.10	16.33
C	University of Science and Technology of China	9.57	67.83	14.78	7.83
	Air Force Medical University	61.29	19.35	19.35	0.00
	Guangdong Institute of Science and Technology	0.00	50.00	25.00	25.00

Sampled university official accounts are generally based on daily content, and the publishing of ideological politics articles is at a low level. The University of Science and Technology of China has the best performance in the former, while South China Normal University has an outstanding performance in the latter.

The types of articles from university official accounts of Peking University and Hubei University on the A layer are relatively balanced, and other universities are generally imbalanced. For example, the Air Force Medical University mainly focuses on ideological politics articles accounting for 61.29%, while the analogy of stories highlighting humanistic characteristics is 0.

Campus media should pay special attention to ideological political education, which mostly adopts multiple themes in sampled universities' official accounts. Peking University, Hubei University, and Southeast University on the A layer are rich in ideological political themes, while South China Normal University on the A layer and Guangdong Institute of Science and Technology on the C layer are relatively simple, with ideological political themes of other universities covering three subdivision types.

In stories type of content, sampled universities generally produce "students' stories". Except Peking University's daily release of the three subdivided subjects shown in the table is relatively balanced, other universities have more or less uneven and zero proportion of subjects.

Table 3. Proportion of Ideological Politics Content in Sampled Universities (%)

Sampling Group	Ideological Politics Types Sampled Universities	Traditional Culture	Major Event	Educational Activities	Character Commemoration	School History
A	Peking University	1.46	8.46	5.20	3.74	1.63
	South China Normal University	0.00	3.49	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Hubei University	0.21	12.03	1.24	0.21	0.62
B	Southeast University	7.35	4.41	3.92	0.49	1.96
	Suzhou University	7.93	4.88	4.88	0.00	0.30
	Zhuhai Institute of Science and Technology	0.57	2.87	5.73	0.00	0.00
C	University of Science and Technology of China	0.00	3.48	5.22	0.00	0.87
	Air Force Medical University	0.00	12.90	48.39	0.00	0.00
	Guangdong Institute of Science and Technology	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Table 4. Proportion of Story Content in Sampled Universities (%)

Sampling Group	Story Type Sampled Universities	Stories of Teachers	Stories of Students	Stories of Alumni and Faculties
A	Peking University	7.48	6.99	4.23
	South China Normal University	4.65	15.12	1.16
	Hubei University	1.24	18.67	1.24
B	Southeast University	1.47	8.82	0.00
	Suzhou University	0.00	17.07	1.22
	Zhuhai Institute of Science and Technology	2.29	9.46	4.58
C	University of Science and Technology of China	0.87	6.96	0.00
	Air Force Medical University	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Guangdong Institute of Science and Technology	25.00	0.00	0.00

(3) Audience Preferences of Sampled University Official Accounts

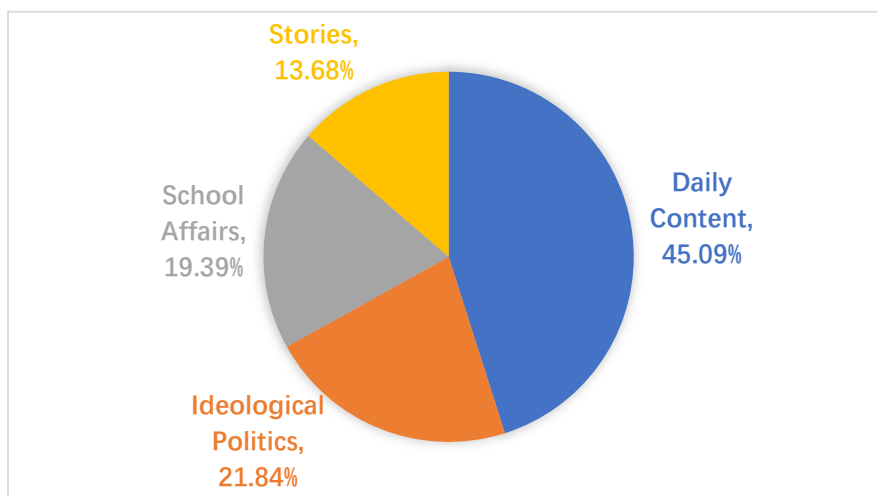


Figure 1. Proportion of Each Content Type in the Monthly Article List

Overall, readers prefer to browse daily content accounting for 45.09%; Ideological politics and school affairs took second place, accounting for 21.84% and 19.39% respectively; Stories account for the smallest proportion, that is, 13.68%. It can be seen that the contents related to social hot topics and large-scale university activities are more influential, hot, and eye-catching in the articles of university official accounts.

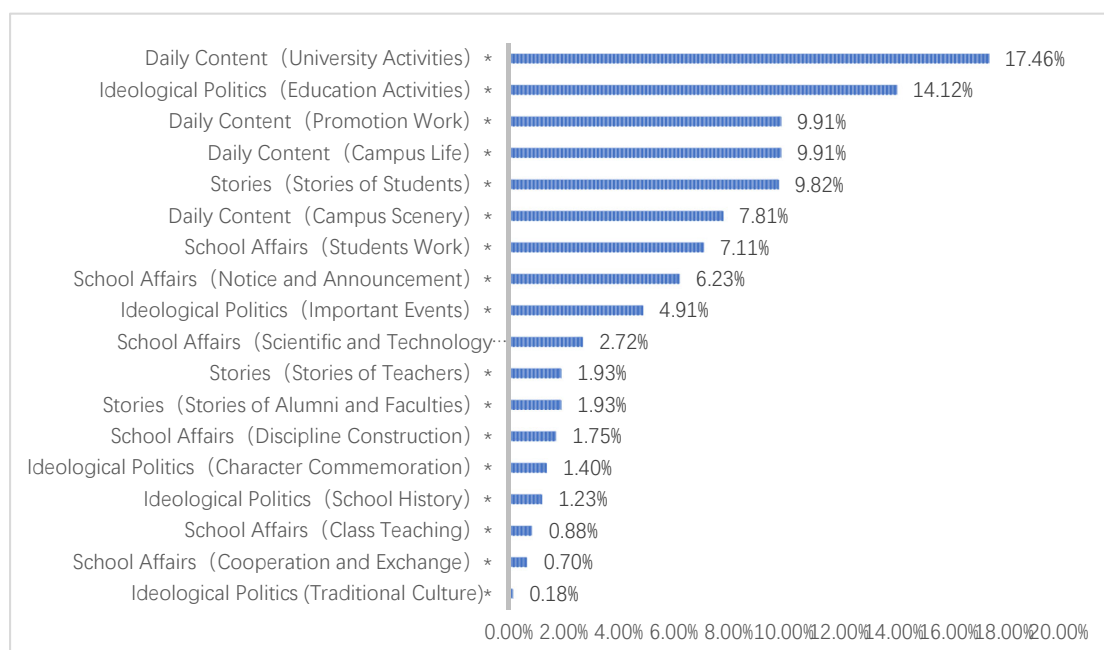


Figure 2. Proportion of Each Content Subdivision in the Monthly Article List

From the perspective of subdivision types, daily “university activities” and “educational activities” in ideological politics have the highest popularity, accounting for 17.46% and 14.12% respectively, while “classroom teaching”, “cooperation and exchange” in school affairs as well as “traditional culture” in ideological politics have lower attention, less than 1%.

Analyzing them one by one, we find that the popularity of daily content is generally high, accounting for more than 7%; Except for the popularity of “educational activities” as high as 14.12%, the popularity of ideological politics is mostly at a low point; In addition to “student work” along with “notice and announcement”, other subdivision types of school affairs are also in the middle and lower positions; Among stories, “stories of students” have the highest popularity, accounting for 9.82%, while “stories of teachers” and “stories of alumni/faculty” account for 1.93%.

(4) Social Influence of Sampled University Official Accounts

Table 5. Number of Original Articles in Sampled Universities

Sampling Group	Sampled Universities	Number of Original Articles on the List
A	Peking University	256
	South China Normal University	15
	Hubei University	7
	Southeast University	4
B	Suzhou University	5
	Zhuhai Institute of Science and Technology	2
	University of Science and Technology of China	0
C	Air Force Medical University	1
	Guangdong Institute of Science and Technology	1

The number of original articles in sampled universities is generally less. As one of the most remarkable universities in China, Peking University has both a great sense of network and its own traffic. Original articles have been listed 256 times, and their influence has widened a gap with other universities. However, a good school is not exactly equal to a large network flow. Among the 985 universities at the same level, the number of original articles of the University of Science and Technology of China located on the C layer is 0, which is the only university among the 9 sampled universities that have not been listed.

4. Research Conclusions

The articles of university official accounts come from various sources and are rich in subdivided columns. With academic influence, they are widely solicited for teachers, students, alumni, or all sectors of society. For example, Peking University invites scholars on campus to write articles, and the disciplines cover history, literature, economics, science, etc. Zhuhai Institute of Science and Technology collects column manuscripts of “People in Jizhu”, “Alumni Story”, and “Visual Creativity” for teachers and students in the school. Suzhou University collects manuscripts from the “Listening” column for society.

The published content of university official accounts takes teachers, students, and alumni as the main audience, which also takes into account social hot topics. Because the audience community is accumulative and representative, the content selection and information release of university official accounts must be more suitable for the needs of teachers and students, so as to enhance their own positioning and user stickiness. At the same time, colleges and universities will also focus on current politics and social hot trends, and enrich the material library and audience, such as series published in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic and supplementary reports according to hot events. South China Normal University’s Why is this Chinese Teacher Girl so Brave in the Face of Evil Deeds, Peking University’s Quanzhou’s Successful Application for the World Heritage! Come and Have a Look with Xiaobei and Exclusive! Peking University Archaeological Authoritative Experts Take You to Decrypt Sanxingdui’s Largest Sacrificial Pit are the representative ones.

There are many forms of university official accounts, making good use of new media technology and combining pictures, texts, audio, and video. For example, Suzhou University published Come From All Over the World! The Alumni Map of Suzhou University’s 120th Anniversary is Waiting for you to Light Up!, use H5 technology to create an “alumni map” to improve users’ sense of participation and experience. Some colleges and universities will periodically update audio or hand-painted tweets to bring users a stable and rich reading experience, such as the topic of “Idle Talking in SCNU” at South China Normal University and the column “Listening” at Suzhou University.

The ideological politics' educational function of university official accounts has become increasingly prominent with vivid forms, diverse perspectives, and strong proximity, which is no longer limited to important speeches or party history study. For example, Peking University launched radio dramas Red House of Peking University and Fire Spreader, while the University of Science and Technology of China launched a series of microfilms such as "Older Generation Scientists".

The annual summary of university official accounts has become the norm. The year-end inventory is used to create a sense of ritual communication. Meanwhile, experience and methods are summed up internally to promote the continuous improvement of new media operations. For example, Southeast University held an annual "Top Ten News" selection activity, and South China Normal University released SCNU, Fifth in China! and review the annual ranking changes, annual hot words, and audience feedback of the university official account in the "2020-2021 Annual Rankings of Chinese University Official Accounts" published by China Youth Daily.

The professional development of the universities' official account is different. For example, the global communication media matrix established by Peking University covers many forms of campus media, new media, and government affairs numbers. The theme closely follows social hot trends, and the content is original and fresh; Daily content usually adopts headline publication whose frequency is stable, with 1-3 articles per day and clear time periods. The content of similar subjects is clear, and the reading experience is better. However, the official WeChat account of Air Force Medical University can publish up to more than ten articles in one day, and the article mode of the university is often disorderly regardless of priority difference, which makes users have to face tedious information and hinders daily content browsing.

The innovative agenda-setting of universities' official accounts is not enough. In view of the original events concerning specific universities, the reporting perspective is single, which fails to seize the opportunity and dig deep into the details, so as to expand the influence of events, form phenomenal explosions, and maximize them in both directions with universities. For example, Hubei University reported on hot figures, including Broadcast on the News: Sunshine Girl From Hubei University was praised by Vice Premier Sun Chunlan! and Brave to Save a life: Awesome HBUEr! The former failed to make supplementary reports on news events from more angles, while the latter lacked a certain depth in reporting and failed to fully stimulate its news potential.

The promotion work of university official accounts is generally confined to periodic nodes such as enrollment, school celebration, and graduation. Because of the special social nature of colleges and universities, their content selection has certain regularity and convergence, and the reporting will last for a long time, so it is easy to have problems such as single perspective or repeated reporting, lacking its own characteristics. For example, the reports on school celebrations of many colleges and universities listed in the TOP100 Monthly Articles Reading Rankings of National Colleges and Universities are often carried out from the perspective of narrating school history, with pictures and texts as well as the increasingly patterned layout and content as mostly presentation forms.

5. Enlightenment and Suggestions

The talent team should be strengthened. Most of the talents are non-professionals. Colleges and universities should pay attention to the construction of school media and regard it as a part of their daily work. An efficient and professional all-media talent team should be built, so that school media personnel have many skills such as planning, interviewing, shooting, writing, editing, art design, technology, and design, which is the basic guarantee for the integration and development of school media. We'd better deploy from the Promotion Department of the Party Committee from the top to the bottom, equip instructors, and absorb student journalists, apart from training talent echelons and assigning special personnel to ensure the basic skills mastery of relevant personnel and the operation quality of campus media. At the same time, we should strengthen cooperation and exchanges with local mainstream media and other universities, and build a diversified publicity and practice platform. In addition, due to the special nature of campus media, the competition is often no greater than that

of social media, which requires colleges and universities to establish a sound incentive mechanism to ensure the internal vitality of the promotion team.

Ideological politics communication should be enhanced. To do a good job in leading youth thoughts, we must always combine with the times' development. Colleges and universities can take hot current events, Party history, and traditional culture as the basic points, so as to improve their standing position, soften their language, and guide public opinion. Efforts should be made to attract audiences to select topics and present them, while ideological politics functions of campus new media should be brought into play through softer and more attentive ways such as a drama and a film.

Tell college stories well. As one of the important communication and construction carriers of campus culture construction, campus media also highlights its function in the guidance of mainstream public opinion, transmitting the value orientation of a university, carrying forward the university spirit, and creating a healthy, upward, and harmonious campus culture atmosphere. Based on setting up a "character column", colleges and universities can properly open their contribution channels to teachers and students on campus and alumni off campus. Based on grasping the main theme, they can select typical figures with certain influence and make in-depth reports on alumni representatives who love teaching, devote themselves to scientific research, get rid of poverty, and work hard, so as to enrich material sources and better spread campus stories.

The publishing mode should be optimized. In addition to obeying the law of new media communication and giving priority to multiple pushes to be released, we need to consider both tender and hard manners as well as reasonably match and properly divert them.

Make good use of new media technology. If the school media can combine the characteristics and specialties of the school to tap its own characteristics, it can have a unique attraction to the audience. Present the report content in a more flexible way, explore multiple angles, and create the characteristics of colleges and universities. We can also make use of the influence of academia and the advantages of talents to report from different professional aspects, enrich the reporting perspectives, and form social influence.

Expand publicity channels. At present, colleges and universities generally establish media matrices, which can expand their influence by means of complementary drainage such as official WeChat accounts, video numbers, and Weibo. Through the operation of campus official WeChat accounts, the publicity dimension of university media can be effectively expanded, and more audiences can grasp campus information more conveniently by paying attention to such accounts. Meanwhile, we should make good use of the first-hand data of the platform, analyze the audience orientation, and spread accurately. In addition, we can cooperate with other universities or social media to launch joint planning or special reports to achieve a win-win situation.

6. Conclusion

Up against media convergence, grasping the development status of new media in colleges and universities in China is key to promoting the integration of educational media. While doing a good job in high-quality content, campus media must adhere to the Marxist view of journalism, keep pace with the times, and master universities' ideological promotion, so that ideological politics education can truly integrate into university campuses. At the same time, as a new content and form of campus media communication, the official WeChat account of colleges and universities exerts its unique advantages, shapes the campus image, and expands the influence and communication power of college media with benign publicity and society education.

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