

The Way Forward for Online Public Opinion Governance in the Age of Big Data

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Abstract: With the rapid development of big data technology and the popularization of Internet applications, the role of Internet public opinion in social governance has become increasingly prominent. Internet public opinion not only reflects hot issues of social concern and public sentiment, but also affects social stability and national security. Therefore, strengthening the rule of law governance of online public opinion has become an urgent problem. The purpose of this study is to explore the rule of law basis and major problems of online public opinion governance in the era of big data, to analyse the shortcomings of the current implementation of the rule of law in online public opinion, and to propose corresponding countermeasures. In the context of the big data era, the rule of law in online public opinion governance faces challenges in many aspects. Inadequate supervision, imperfect rule of law system, deficiencies in the implementation mechanism, and weak public awareness of the rule of law together constitute the main problems in the current governance of online public opinion. To effectively deal with these problems, it is necessary to start with strengthening supervision, improving the rule of law system, reinforcing the implementation mechanism and raising awareness of the rule of law. Through these measures, a more mature and effective rule of law system for the governance of online public opinion can be constructed, thereby safeguarding the healthy development of the online information environment and maintaining social harmony and stability.

Keywords: Big Data; Online Public Opinion; Governance.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

With the rapid development of information technology, especially big data technology, the Internet has become a major platform for public information exchange and expression of opinions. A large amount of data flows rapidly through the Internet, forming Internet public opinion with a wide impact. As an aggregation of public opinions, online public opinion not only reflects social hotspots and guides public sentiment in real time, but also may have far-reaching impacts on policy making, market trends and even social stability. However, the rapid development of online public opinion has also brought about an increase in the difficulty of supervision, and the negative effects of public opinion should not be ignored, such as the spread of false information, cyber-violence, privacy leakage and other problems that have gradually emerged. The emergence of these problems exposes the deficiencies of the existing network public opinion governance system in the construction of the rule of law, the regulatory mechanism, and the application of technology. Therefore, it is of great practical significance to study the rule of law approach to network public opinion governance in the era of big data in order to promote the modernisation of social governance and maintain network security and social stability. By establishing a sound rule of law system, improving relevant laws and regulations, and strengthening the application of public opinion monitoring and analysing technologies, we can provide legal basis and technical support for the governance of online public opinion, ensure a clear cyberspace, and promote social harmony.

1.2. Significance of the Study

The study of the rule of law in the governance of online public opinion has multiple significance in the context of the big data era. Firstly, it helps to enhance the scientific and effective regulation of online public opinion, regulate online behaviour through the rule of law, safeguard the authenticity and legitimacy of information dissemination, and thus maintain the order of cyberspace. Second, as cyberspace becomes an important place for the public to express their opinions and participate in social governance, studying the rule of law governance mechanism of online public opinion can enhance the public's trust and reliance on the law, and improve the awareness of the rule of law and legal literacy of the whole society. In addition, a perfect rule of law system for online public opinion can provide support for national decision-making. Through effective control and utilisation of online public opinion, the government can accurately grasp the trends of social opinion in a timely manner, provide references for the formulation and adjustment of public policies, and enhance the transparency of and public satisfaction with the policies. At the same time, this research is also of reference significance to the international community, because the governance of online public opinion is not only a need for the construction of the rule of law at home, but also a common problem and challenge in the field of global Internet governance. Therefore, the construction of a reasonable and effective rule of law system for online public opinion has far-reaching theoretical and practical value in promoting the construction of a rule-of-law state, a rule-of-law government and a rule-of-law society.

2. The Rule of Law Foundation for Online Public Opinion Governance in the Age of Big Data

2.1. Basic Theory of the Rule of Law

In the era of big data, the foundation of the rule of law for the governance of online public opinion rests first and foremost on the basic theory of the rule of law, which emphasises the supreme authority and universal applicability of the law. The core of the rule of law lies in the fact that all power operations must be carried out in accordance with the law, and all members of society, including government agencies and individual citizens, should exercise their rights and perform their duties within the scope of the law. The rule of law theory advocates the formulation of clear and fair laws, and requires that the process of implementing the law be open and transparent to ensure the stability and predictability of the law's effect, thereby reducing or eliminating the uncertainty and arbitrariness in the discretionary space. In the governance of online public opinion, the application of this theory requires the formulation of special legal norms for the dissemination of online information to ensure that freedom and order are balanced in cyberspace, and at the same time protects basic rights such as personal privacy and the right to honour through legal means, and prevents and punishes cybercrime. In addition, the basic theory of the rule of law emphasises the synergistic progress of law and technology, and that only by combining legal norms with modern information technologies, such as big data and artificial intelligence, can we effectively respond to the governance challenges posed by the increasingly complex cyberenvironment, and thus build a rule of law system for the governance of online public opinion that is adapted to the characteristics of the new era.

2.2. Rule of Law Principles for Online Public Opinion Governance in the Age of Big Data

In the era of big data, the principles of the rule of law that should be followed in the governance of online public opinion include the principles of the primacy of law, fairness and justice, transparency, responsibility, and respect for the development of science and technology. The principle of legal priority requires that all online behaviours comply with existing laws and regulations to ensure that the law is the ultimate binding force in cyberspace. The principle of fairness and justice requires that a balance be struck between protecting individual rights and the public interest in the governance of online public opinion, fully safeguarding freedom of expression while preventing it from being abused to infringe on the rights and interests of others. The principle of transparency emphasises that the governance process should be open and transparent, guaranteeing the fair dissemination of information and allowing the public to monitor the process of public opinion governance. The principle of responsibility clarifies the responsibilities of information publishers, dissemination platforms, and regulatory bodies in the governance of online public opinion, ensuring that each subject is responsible for the consequences of his or her actions. The principle of respecting the development of science and technology recognises that in the context of big data, online public opinion governance needs to keep pace with the times, follow the trend of technological

development, and make use of advanced technological means for scientific management. Together, these principles constitute the framework of the rule of law for the governance of online public opinion in the era of big data, which is of great significance in guiding the practical operation, improving the relevant laws and regulations, and enhancing the efficiency of governance.

2.3. Rule of Law System for Online Public Opinion Governance in the Age of Big Data

The rule of law system for the governance of online public opinion in the era of big data is a multi-level and multi-dimensional composite structure designed to achieve orderly management of the online information environment through legal norms and institutional arrangements. This system is rooted in the Constitution, with relevant cyber information laws, administrative regulations and local regulations as the skeleton, supplemented by departmental regulations and industry standards, etc., to form an all-encompassing coverage from macroscopic to microcosmic and from national to local. In terms of content, it covers a wide range of areas such as information security, data protection, personal privacy, intellectual property protection, network communication order, and network integrity building. The legal system is not only required to regulate the production, dissemination and consumption of online information, but also to provide standards for identifying and punishing illegal acts, ensuring that the governance of online public opinion is both legally enforceable and legally compliant. At the same time, the system also needs to be in line with international legal standards, so that when dealing with transnational online public opinion events, it can coordinate the legal differences between different countries and regions and promote international cooperation in global Internet governance. As science and technology continue to advance, the rule of law system also needs to continuously adapt to new technological developments, update and improve relevant legal provisions, and ensure its flexibility and adaptability in the context of big data.

3. Problems of Online Public Opinion Governance in the Age of Big Data

3.1. Insufficient Regulation of Online Public Opinion

One of the problems in the governance of online public opinion in the era of big data is the insufficient supervision of online public opinion. With the rapid development of Internet technology, the volume of information on the Internet is growing explosively, and all kinds of information are intertwined and complex, which brings unprecedented challenges to regulation. Regulatory authorities often face problems such as slow technological follow-up, outdated regulatory means, and a lack of professionals, making it difficult to effectively monitor and manage the huge and complex online data. Existing laws and regulations are often designed for traditional public opinion governance scenarios, making it difficult to directly adapt to new situations in the context of big data, resulting in a lagging of regulations and insufficient enforcement efforts. At the same time, due to the cross-domain nature of online information dissemination, it is difficult for the regulatory power of a single country or region

to effectively intervene in transnational online public opinion, which leads to a mismatch between the territorial limitations of regulation and the global online environment. As a result, the supervision of online public opinion is insufficient, and it is difficult to fully cover all corners of cyberspace, and the identification and handling of illegal information often seems to be out of reach.

3.2. Inadequate Rule of Law System for Internet Public Opinion

One of the major problems facing the governance of online public opinion in the era of big data is the inadequacy of the rule of law system for online public opinion. This is mainly reflected in the lack of perfect laws and regulations, the lack of close coordination between laws and regulations, and the difficulty in implementing the laws. It is difficult for existing laws and regulations to cover all areas of online information dissemination, especially with the rapid development of new social media platforms, instant messaging tools, and various applications, which have brought about many new legal challenges. In addition, the pace of lawmaking and revision often lags behind technological development, resulting in laws lagging behind practice. Even where laws have been enacted, there are problems of applicability, as the analysis and use of big data may involve a number of legal areas, such as privacy protection and data security, and regulations in these areas need to be systematically coordinated in order to create effective governance. At the level of law implementation, the virtual and anonymous nature of cyberspace, coupled with the constant updating of technological means, has made law enforcement more difficult, making it difficult to trace and collect evidence of violations, and weakening the deterrent and enforcement power of the law to a certain extent.

3.3. Incomplete Implementation Mechanism for the Rule of Law on Internet Public Opinion

One of the more prominent problems in the governance of online public opinion in the era of big data is the imperfection of the rule of law implementation mechanism. This is mainly due to the fact that even though relevant laws and regulations have been established, they still face various challenges in the process of concrete implementation. First, law enforcement agencies may lack clear implementation standards and procedures at the operational level, making it difficult to deal with online public opinion incidents in a way that is both effective and consistent with the rule of law. Second, the monitoring and management of online public opinion requires a great deal of technical support, including data collection, analysis and processing, but in reality, there may be problems with outdated technical means and insufficient data processing capabilities. Furthermore, the trans-territorial nature of online public opinion makes the implementation of the rule of law face the challenge of cross-regional coordination, and the differences in laws of different regions and countries, as well as the obstacles to collaboration among law enforcement agencies, may all affect the effectiveness of the implementation of the rule of law.

3.4. Weak Awareness of the Rule of Law in Online Public Opinion

In the era of big data, despite the gradual establishment of

a rule of law system for the governance of online public opinion, the problem of weak awareness of the rule of law prevails. This is mainly manifested in the public's insufficient knowledge of cyber laws and regulations, lack of sufficient awareness of the legal consequences of cyber speech and behaviour, and insufficient attention to the protection of personal information and cybersecurity. This leads to the fact that network users may inadvertently break the law when using the Internet in their daily life, or lack the necessary awareness of legal protection against online infringements suffered. At the same time, network platform operators and content providers are not sufficiently aware of their legal responsibilities, and sometimes neglect their responsibility to review and control undesirable information in order to pursue economic interests.

4. Countermeasures for Online Public Opinion Governance in the Era of Big Data

4.1. Strengthening the Monitoring of Online Public Opinion

In the era of big data, strengthening the regulation of online public opinion is an important countermeasure for achieving effective governance. This requires regulators to upgrade their regulatory technology and make use of advanced technological means, such as big data analysis and artificial intelligence, to improve their ability to monitor the flow of information on the Internet and their processing speed. Regulators should establish and improve online information monitoring systems, track public opinion dynamics in real time, respond quickly to abnormal information, and effectively prevent and deal with social problems that may arise. At the same time, there is a need to strengthen cross-sectoral, cross-regional and even international cooperation and information-sharing, and to form a joint mechanism to deal with the cross-domain flow characteristics of online information.

Regulation should be strengthened not only at the technical level, but also at the legal level. This includes revising and improving relevant laws and regulations so that they can more accurately address the new features and problems of online information dissemination and improve the relevance and operability of the regulations. Lawmakers should evaluate existing laws and update legal provisions that do not adapt to the current online environment, so as to ensure the timeliness and forward-looking nature of the laws. At the same time, legal penalties for the dissemination of illegal information should be increased, and those who spread rumours, invade privacy and disseminate illegal content should be severely cracked down on, in order to act as a deterrent and keep the cyber environment clear.

4.2. Improving the Rule of Law System for Internet Public Opinion

In improving the rule of law system for Internet public opinion, first of all, it is necessary to clarify the importance of keeping laws and regulations up to date in order to adapt to the constantly evolving Internet environment and technological development. The legislature should conduct a comprehensive review of existing laws and regulations and make timely adjustments in response to new developments in network information technology, especially in the areas of

data protection, personal privacy, intellectual property rights, and network security. The applicability and operability of legal provisions should be strengthened to ensure that the law can effectively cover emerging patterns of online behaviour and forms of communication. Through this process, the deterrent effect of the law is strengthened, and the belief in the rule of law is established in the hearts of citizens, providing a solid legal foundation for the governance of online public opinion. Secondly, it is necessary to build a comprehensive legal system including prevention, mediation, punishment and relief to ensure that every aspect of online public opinion is regulated and guided by law. On this basis, it is also necessary to strengthen the supervision, inspection and evaluation feedback mechanism in the process of implementing the law to ensure that the law is effectively enforced and that deficiencies in implementation are corrected in a timely manner. At the same time, the improvement of the rule of law system also needs to be equipped with professional legal talents, especially those experts who are familiar with cyber technology and cyber law, in order to guarantee the professionalism and accuracy of the interpretation and implementation of the law.

4.3. Strengthening the Rule of Law Implementation Mechanism for Online Public Opinion

In today's information age, the strengthening of the mechanism for implementing the rule of law in cyber public opinion is the key to safeguarding order in cyberspace. This process of ensuring the effective implementation of laws and regulations in cyberspace requires not only clarifying and reinforcing the responsibilities of regulatory bodies, but also forming a comprehensive enforcement framework through a sound legal system and technical support. The role of law enforcement agencies is crucial, and they must be armed with both legal authority and advanced technology to accurately identify and deal with cyber violations. At the same time, the constantly optimised structure of professionals within these agencies and the application of emerging technologies combine legal provisions with cyber realities to enhance legal adaptability and enforcement.

As the cyber environment continues to evolve, regulatory strategies and tools also need to remain flexible and forward-looking. The use of big data analysis, cloud computing resources and artificial intelligence algorithms not only enhances the ability to monitor online public opinion in real time, but also strengthens the ability to predict and prevent potential risks. Through these technological means, rule of law implementation mechanisms can better adapt to rapid changes in the online environment and ensure the timeliness and effectiveness of regulatory measures.

At the same time, the construction of an effective evaluation and feedback system is crucial for regulatory agencies, which can provide scientific decision-making support for the implementation of the rule of law. By continuously monitoring and analysing online public opinion and evaluating the effectiveness of law implementation, regulatory agencies can identify problems in a timely manner, make targeted adjustments to law enforcement strategies, and implement necessary law revisions to guarantee the simultaneous progress of the law and social reality. This dynamic regulatory mechanism not only promotes the precision of law implementation, but also enhances the adaptability and guidance of the rule of law to the

management of online public opinion.

4.4. Raising Awareness of the Rule of Law in Online Public Opinion

Raising awareness of the rule of law in online public opinion is an important part of online public opinion management, and the key lies in popularising education on the rule of law and enhancing citizens' awareness of consciously abiding by online regulations. This requires that rule of law publicity and education reach out to the public and take a variety of forms and channels to make the concept of the rule of law a conscious code of conduct for the public, especially Internet users. The public's level of legal knowledge and awareness of the rule of law can be effectively raised through a rich variety of activities to promote the rule of law, such as cyber rule of law themed publicity weeks and online legal knowledge contests. The education sector should incorporate education on the rule of law on the Internet into the school education system, so as to cultivate the concept of the rule of law on the Internet among students from an early age, and to forge good habits of compliance with the law.

At the same time, it is necessary to intensify the crackdown on cybercrime, demonstrate the seriousness and authority of the law through the exposure of typical cases, and make the public aware of the serious consequences of illegal behaviour. The media and online platforms should also actively participate in the promotion of awareness of the rule of law on the Internet, using their influence to promote knowledge of the rule of law, guide correct online behaviour and form a good online public opinion environment. They should strengthen the monitoring and early warning of online violations, expose and stop all kinds of illegal acts in a timely manner, and enhance the recognition of and trust in the rule of law on the Internet by society as a whole.

5. Summary

In summary, the rule of law management of online public opinion is an inevitable requirement for maintaining order in cyberspace and promoting social harmony and stability. By continuously improving the rule of law system for online public opinion, strengthening the rule of law implementation mechanism, and raising the public's awareness of the rule of law, it is possible to build a new pattern of online public opinion management with the participation of the whole society. This pattern, on the basis of ensuring that the laws and regulations governing online public opinion keep pace with the times, the regulatory system is scientific and efficient, and the public actively participates in it, forms an online environment of multifaceted collaboration and shared governance. In the future, with the advancement of technology and the development of society, online public opinion will show more diversified characteristics, and rule of law management will also face new challenges and opportunities. Only by continuously promoting the rule of law and adapting to changes can we ensure a clearer cyberspace and provide strong information support and public opinion guarantee for the construction of socialist modernisation.

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