An analysis of burnout behavior of college students using WeChat moments based on rooted theory

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Abstract

With the widespread popularity and deep penetration of social media, users are actively or passively tied to social media in depth, and the phenomenon of social media burnout has built a scale. Taking WeChat moments as the analysis context, this study conducted in-depth interviews with 8 college students about their use of moments and feelings through the research method of rooted theory. Through the stages of open coding, spindle coding, selective coding and theoretical saturation test, a model of social media burnout psychology and burnout behavior was constructed. The research finds that the change of external environment affects the change of ontology factors, the situation factors, environmental factors and ontology factors jointly affect the generation of user burnout psychology, and burnout psychology further leads to user burnout behavior, and the negative degree of burnout behavior caused by different intensity of user burnout psychology is different.

Keywords

Social media burnout; Circle of friends; Withdrawal behavior; Grounded theory.

1. Introduction

In recent years, various types of social media have developed rapidly, bringing users more information, entertainment and other values, but also a lot of troubles. Wechat, as a social media with a high usage rate, connects people's lives and inevitably troubles most users. Since wechat was launched in 2011, its important function plug-in -- Moments of friends has been the focus of users' attention. By the end of 2018, the number of daily users in wechat moments had exceeded 750 million. However, with the expansion of wechat friends, the acquaintance ecology of the circle of friends is deconstructed, and more and more users gradually escape from the circle of friends, resulting in the burnout of the circle of friends, many users choose to stop publishing personal news or even close the entrance of the circle of friends. CNNIC survey report shows that as of December 2018, the use rate of wechat circle of friends was 83.4%, down 3.9 percentage points from the end of 2017. The "autistic" functions of wechat's own online "moments can only be seen for three days", "batch management of infrequent friends" and "instant video", which is only reserved for 24 hours, are also a response to this. At the same time, relevant studies have pointed out that the mainstream social media in China, such as wechat and Douban, have also seen the phenomenon of veteran users fleeing.

This phenomenon of global users Posting less and less status and photos on social media and participating in social media is called social media burnout, and social media burnout may be becoming a worldwide spreading social phenomenon. In addition, the recent years under the epidemic situation have catalyzed the generation of social media burnout. Therefore, this paper intends to explore and study this phenomenon.

In view of this, this paper mainly focuses on the burnout psychology and negative use behavior of young college students in the use of wechat moments, and focuses on the motivation analysis

of college students' burnout in the use of wechat moments. At the same time, this paper mainly explores the influencing factors of burnout in wechat moments and the interactive relationship between burnout and negative use behavior by taking root in the burnout psychology and negative use behavior of college students' wechat moments, with a view to making a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the motivation of social media burnout.

2. Literature review

2.1. Social media burnout concept review

The concept of social media burnout originated from the definition of job burnout in the clinical field [1]. Job burnout is manifested as a physiological and psychological state. Its burnout comes from the fact that individuals face work pressure and have to suffer from passive social interaction for the sake of work, thus presenting a kind of psychological fatigue, inducing subjective physiological fatigue to appear, manifested as not wanting to work, in the current popular terms, that is, in a state of "disorganized". Foreign research attention on social media burnout is earlier, and domestic scholars have also begun to pay attention to this research direction since 2014. At present, the academic circles mainly define the concept of social media burnout from the perspective of emotion and behavior. The emotional perspective is characterized by feeling tired of social media, and negative emotions such as anxiety, fatigue and boredom. The behavioral perspective is to reduce the frequency of using social media, and even a few people return to the earlier ways of communication -- email, SMS and so on. According to Dhir et al. [2], social media burnout includes multi-dimensional manifestations such as boredom at the psychological level, physical exhaustion and behavioral flight. To sum up, the internal definition of social media burnout in academic circles is basically the same, that is, individual users reduce the frequency and duration of using social media due to subjective negative emotions such as anxiety.

With the expansion of social networks, social overload becomes increasingly prominent, which is mainly manifested by the over-expansion of the number of users' friends and the complexity of social network relationships [3]. Wechat, as a social media with a high usage rate, connects people's lives, and wechat circle of friends is a medium with high stickiness for communication among wechat friends. With the outward expansion of personal life, the list of friends in wechat is constantly increasing, and the information in wechat circle of friends is becoming more and more diversified, showing the situation of information overload. At the same time, the relationship in the wechat circle of friends is a means of "sincerity", and to a certain extent, the link between the circle of friends is also "fragile". When a certain wechat friend actively shares interesting things in life, most of the users who see the friend circle are casual browsing and leaving likes at will, and there are few "sincere" interactions between friends, that is, the contact is "fragile". Burke et al. [4] found that individuals who passively participate in social media and lack interaction have a stronger sense of loneliness. This individual will also reduce his personal activity based on self-loneliness. Guo Jiahang [5], based on the three-dimensional cognitive factors of role pressure, mentioned that if an individual user is emotionally exhausted due to role pressure in wechat (circle of friends) interaction, he will tend to reduce interaction and activity frequency, and the burnout from emotion to behavior, namely the manifestation of social media burnout. Faced with the emotion of social media burnout, individual users may turn off the update reminder of the small red dot in the circle of friends, open a wechat trumpet, or force themselves not to look at the circle of friends and temporarily escape the role pressure of the circle of friends. On the other hand, they will uninstall wechat directly, "call for something", and use the phone as the current contact method.

In this regard, Li Xu [3] et al. studied social media user burnout and negative use behavior from the perspective of cognitive load, and built a related model. Based on the cognitive load theory,

they produced negative emotions for social media users under the background of information overload, social overload and service overload, which is called social media burnout. As a result, negative behaviors such as diving, shielding, ignoring and quitting appear.

2.2. An overview of the causes of social media burnout

1. Environmental factors lead to social media burnout.

Based on the "stressor-psychological burden-behavioral performance" (SSO) model framework in social psychology, and taking burnout and psychological resistance as mediating variables, this paper studies the impact of information epidemic on college students' negative information behavior, including excessive epidemic information pushing and excessive epidemic information sharing on social media. Will have a negative impact on college students' psychology and behavior. Make college students suffer from burnout, and then trigger their burnout of choosing not to use social media continuously.

2. Media information overload leads to social media burnout.

Nova Spivack points out that society officially entered the stage of social media information overload in 2011, which he calls Sharepocalypse. According to Shuwei Zhang et al's research, the explanation power of information overload directly leading to social media burnout is as high as 64.4%[4]. In the era of big data, the threshold for college students to obtain and disseminate information on social media has become lower, and they are in a state of information explosion and uneven information quality, and the overload of social information is likely to lead to social media burnout.

3. Oversocializing leads to social media burnout.

With the growth of the academic year, college students know more and more people, and many of their wechat friends are only casual acquaintances whom they have met once. The number of college students' wechat friends is excessive, and the quality of wechat circle of friends is uneven, which makes their social network relationships more complicated. In his research on the motivation of social network users, Li Dan found that maintaining interpersonal relationships is the main reason for users to use social media [5], which indicates that social media is not completely divorced from real life, and social media has developed into a carrier and platform for real social communication. Therefore, social media should take into account various social relationships in real life. Roommates, relatives, friends, classmates and so on. Due to the consideration and concern of multiple social relationships, college students cannot develop freely on social media as they expected, and are forced to perform behaviors expected by others on social media. As a result, users who originally had to bear the pressure of real life now have to bear the additional pressure brought by social media. To some extent, social media magnifies the social pressure of college students, which leads to the aversion or burnout of social media among young college students.

2.3. Summary

Through the literature review above, it can be seen that the current domestic research on social media burnout mainly focuses on the exploration of its influencing factors and the result analysis, and the research methods and angles are relatively rich. However, at the same time, most of the existing literature on the mechanism of social media burnout focuses on the social platform, user behavior and psychology, and few focus on the overall social environment changes -- the impact of the repeated COVID-19 epidemic since the end of 2019 and the changes in the social environment under the normalization of epidemic prevention and control on social media burnout. In addition, there are few research reports on social media burnout specifically targeting young students in the existing literature in China. Based on the above shortcomings, this study, from the perspective of qualitative analysis, continues to explore the motivation of social media burnout among young college students on the basis of previous studies on social

media burnout, and makes a comprehensive analysis of the motivation from the three dimensions of context, ontology and environment and tries to dig out more potential factors to supplement and enrich the existing relevant research results.

3. Research design

3.1. Research methods

Based on the rooted theory of qualitative research methods, this paper processes and analyzes the interview results of college students among wechat users. Grounded Theory, proposed by sociologists Glaser and Strauss in 1967, is dedicated to the explanation and understanding of social phenomena and provides a set of methods to summarize and construct theories from the original materials. It is an inductive bottom-up research process. Widely used in research for concept development and theory construction, it mainly includes three steps: open coding, spindle coding and selective coding [6].

3.2. Data collection and arrangement

Based on the nature of exploration and discovery, semi-structured interviews are used in this paper, and an interview outline is prepared for the purpose of this study. The interview outline mainly includes two parts: the basic use of the user's wechat circle of friends and the use experience perception. Among them, the user experience and perception is the focus of our interview, which mainly focuses on the following three aspects: 1. Motivation analysis, that is, what factors will cause user burnout when using wechat moments of friends, focusing on the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic; 2. Psychological feelings, which are the main negative emotions caused by user burnout in wechat moments; Subsequent behaviors and reactions, the impact of burnout on users' usage behaviors and how users can adjust them.

The interviewees in this paper are all undergraduate students in Guangdong Ocean University. Face-to-face interviews are conducted. A total of 8 interviewees were selected for this study, and the average time of each interview was within 45-60 minutes. The whole interview was recorded to ensure accuracy and completeness. After all the interviews, the voice and text of the documents were arranged, and nearly 80,000 words of interview records were obtained. All the interviewees are in-depth users of wechat moments. They are familiar with the basic functions of moments and have profound feelings about using them, which meets the needs of interviews. The basic information of the interviewees is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Basic information of respondents

ID	Gender	Grade	Wechat moments use time	Number of wechat friends
A1	male	senior	Three years	443
A2	male	Junior year	7 years	652
B1	female	Senior	8 years	708
B2	female	Junior year	6 years	688
B3	female	Junior year	5 1/2 years	377
B4	female	Junior year	6 years	283
B5	female	Sophomore year	5 years	351
B6	female	Junior year	5 years	456

3.3.   Research based on grounded theory

1. Open coding

The purpose of open coding is to "crumple" and "break" the sentences obtained from interviews after endowing them with connotations, and assign conceptual labels to form more general categories. For the sentences endowed with connotation, only two or more closely related sentences with connotation are assigned to categories, and finally 16 categories are obtained. Table 2 lists only one representative statement.

2. Spindle coding

The purpose of spindle coding is to explain the connotation of each category, dig deep and establish the logical relationship between each category.

Through the analysis, it is found that there is indeed a connection in the connotation of the categories in open coding. According to the logical relations among the 16 categories, this study summarizes 5 main categories, which are situational factors, ontological factors, environmental factors, burnout psychology and burnout use behavior. The specific connotation is shown in Table 3

3. Selective coding

Selective coding is once again integrated and refined on the basis of the content formed by the main axis coding, that is, the core category that can lead all categories is mined from the main category, and the typical model is used to systematically link it with other categories, analyze and verify the connection between them. Using the way of developing "Story Line", the five main categories are connected in series to form a relational structure in order to describe all the context conditions and behavior phenomena, so as to form a theoretical framework. The typical relationship structure of the main category is shown in Table 4.

Through repeated comparative research and in-depth analysis on the original interview data, 16 categories and the five main categories summarized as situational factors, environmental factors, ontology factors, burnout psychology and burnout behavior, the core category of "Influencing factors of social media user burnout and the mechanism of burnout behavior caused by it" is finally integrated and extracted. Based on the "story line" of the core category, the relationship between each main category is sorted out, and the relationship structure is constructed as follows: the three main categories of external situational factors and environmental factors and internal ontology factors have a significant impact on the generation of social media users' burnout psychology, and will further trigger users' negative use behaviors of different degrees. At the same time, the changes of external environmental factors will also have an impact on the ontological factors, which will further affect the use emotions and behaviors of social media users. Based on the typical relationship structure of the main category, this study constructs and develops a social media burnout psychology and burnout behavior model, which is shown in Figure 1.

4. Theoretical saturation test

In this study, two other interview data were used to carry out theoretical saturation test, and the above coding analysis steps were repeated. After in-depth comparative analysis, no other new concepts and categories were found that could affect the core category, so it can be considered that the model reached theoretical saturation.

Table 2 Categorization of open coding

Representative statements of categorical	respondents

Information overload A2 circle of friends has a lot of ads, those micro business ah, will send a lot of circle of friends at the end of the day.

Information quality problem A2 a little look at a lot of good annoyance, look and look, feel that there is nothing interesting.

Social overload B3 sends less messages to the moments of friends and only shares what it wants to share because there are too many people in the moments.

System privacy violation B1 I don't like to show too much of my life on my moments, including Weibo.

Personality traits B3 We all want to show our best side, anyway, we all deliberately say something,

Emotions and cognition A1 Moments are a platform to show you to the outside world, I don't want to send something weird.

Usage Habits and attitude B5 I am going to sleep, a little too much, but I still unconsciously brush, it is a bit kidnapped.

The new coronavirus B1 not only has nothing to post, but even nothing to read, especially when everyone is closing the school.

The B6 circle of friends is coming and going from those few people, and they are always Posting content, so I feel quite boring.

Boredom B4 I am a little bit resistant to the media now because I think it is a little bit of my time.

Anxiety A1 Those words are not as good as others, and it is a bit humiliating to send them, so I will choose to watch others' circle of friends.

Blocking behavior A1 But if he is always this type of person, just block his circle of friends and never look at it again.

Table 3 Main categories formed by spindle coding

Information overload, information quality problem, social overload and system privacy invasion are one of the external factors that affect user burnout psychology	Sometimes there are too many homogenized news in the circle of friends, and they will feel impatient and tired after brushing more of this kind of news. Especially negative news brush screen, brush the mood will be very bad.
The normal containment management under the new coronavirus epidemic is one of the external factors affecting users' burnout psychology	Life under the containment of the epidemic has become very monotonous, I feel that there is nothing to share, and there is no wonderful or more positive news to see in the circle of friends, and too many people complain.

Personality traits, emotions and cognition, usage habits and attitudes are the internal factors that affect user burnout psychology	After brushing the circle of friends too much, they will feel anxious and tired; When you brush the moments, you will not feel the passage of time, and you will feel a waste of time and no meaning.
The change of environmental factors and the difference of intensity will have an impact on the user's personal perception, and then affect the user's mood and behavior	When there is an epidemic, you will often brush the negative news, today there is an epidemic, the next day there is a lockdown, plus you can not go out to play, and you will feel bored.
Different intensity of burnout psychology will affect different degrees of burnout use behavior	I have a period of time is directly to close the circle of friends, because at that time they can not go out to play, and then brush to the circle of friends when someone's life is very colorful will be in a bad mood, and they are afraid of affecting other people do not want to complain, so it is directly closed.

Table 4 Typical relationship structure of the main category
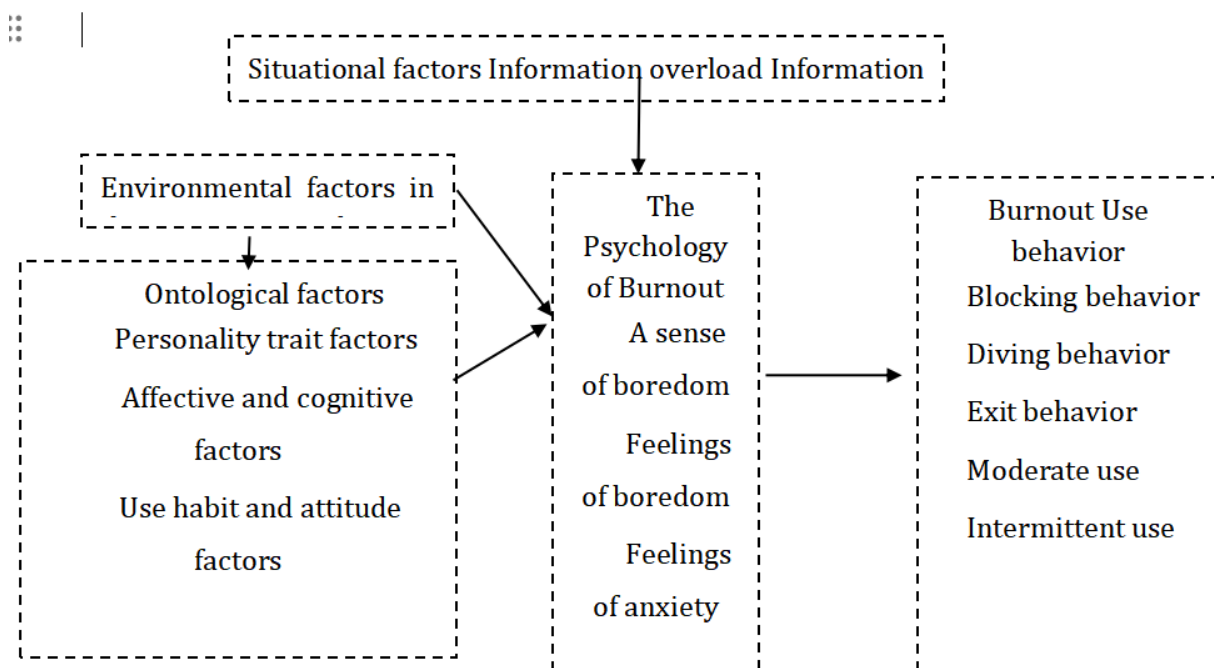
4. Model interpretation and research findings

1. The influence of situational factors on burnout of using wechat moments among college students

Situational factors include four parts: information overload, information quality, system privacy invasion and social overload. In the research, we found 8 interviewees through in-depth interviews with the increase of the academic year, from the first to the fourth year, college students know more and more types of people, different types of friend circles and group messages, and the problem of information overload becomes more and more obvious. Some college students said that sometimes there are too many homogenized and irrelevant news in the circle of friends, and they will feel tired and tired after reading too much similar news. Moreover, browsing the circle of friends seriously occupies their free time. The vision and experience of college students are limited, and most of the time, the opinions expressed in the circle of friends are one-sided, the language is too extreme, the expression is inappropriate, incomplete, and inaccurate, which makes the quality of information can not be guaranteed. College students are basically the children who grew up in the Internet era. With the increasing development of the Internet, the problem of privacy infringement and disclosure is more serious. Many college students say that in order to protect their privacy, they choose not to send friends or set the scope of visibility.

2. The influence of ontology factors on the burnout of using wechat moments among college students

Ontology factors include personality trait factors (there are five big personalities, including: Openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, emotional stability), emotional and cognitive factors (including self-efficacy, impression management, safety concerns, missing out anxiety, etc.), usage habits and attitude factors (including out-of-control self-immersion, compulsive use, flow experience, social comparison, etc.) affect the burnout of using wechat moments of college students. In this study, the ontological factor refers to an individual's emotional experience of the object of the attitude, which can also be regarded as the subjective experience in the cognitive process. Through in-depth interviews, this study found that different personality traits have great differences in the degree of burnout emotion and burnout behavior in wechat moments. Most of the interviewees said that they were deeply affected by emotional and cognitive factors, and personal information processing and cognition often have emotional and emotional arousal functions. For example, the interviewees often worry about whether their self-presentation in the moments is "correct". At the same time, respondents are also troubled by their habits and attitudes, saying that they often unconsciously or subconsciously check their moments meaninglessly, or even force themselves to post regularly on their moments. When users are affected by the above factors for a long time and find it difficult to adjust themselves, their emotions are gradually exhausted, and the use of wechat moments is also changed from active to passive

3. The impact of environmental factors on burnout of using wechat moments among college students

The main environmental factor discussed in this study is the "novel coronavirus pneumonia epidemic". The respondents in this study said that life under lockdown was monotonous and boring. During the epidemic period, wechat moments were filled with a large number of homogenized news, and the long-term strict lockdown management seriously affected the emotional stability of the respondents. In the long run, the respondents felt depressed and resisted the wechat moments of friends. In the face of such changes in the objective environment, users increased their weariness towards the use of wechat moments, which led to their weariness in using them.

4. Burnout affects the burnout of wechat circle of friends used by college students

Burnout psychology includes boredom, boredom and anxiety. The emotions individuals feel have a significant impact on behavior processing. The boredom, boredom and anxiety encoded by the above three levels are the direct causes of the user's blocking, diving, withdrawal behavior, discontinuous and restrained use.

5. Conclusion

In the era of widespread popularity and deep penetration of social media, users' time and energy are constantly divided and occupied. No matter in daily life, work or study, users are actively or passively tightly bound with social media. On the one hand, this kind of binding is convenient and enriched users' lives, but on the other hand, this excessive binding also makes users' negative emotions and negative behaviors accumulate and expand.

This study takes wechat moments as an example to explore the causes of social media burnout and the generation mechanism of negative use behaviors among young students under the new coronavirus pneumonia epidemic. Based on the research of existing experts and scholars, and based on the research method of rooted theory, this study builds an integrated model of social media burnout psychology and burnout behavior (evaluation factor -- emotional response -- coping behavior integration model), reveals and deeply discusses and analyzes the main factors that lead to the burnout of college students' wechat user groups on social media moments. Including situational factors, environmental factors and ontological factors. Among the three factors, situation factor and ontology factor appear more in previous studies, while the related studies on environmental factor are relatively few. However, in-depth interviews show that among college students, there is a widespread phenomenon that changes in personal emotional cognition caused by environmental changes affect social media use behavior. Therefore, this paper believes that environmental factors are also an important factor causing users' social media burnout, which deserves the continuous attention of follow-up researchers.

The analytical results of this study were obtained only by qualitative analysis method, without empirical verification, and its reliability and validity have not been statistically tested by large samples. Empirical analysis and further measurement tests can be conducted on this result in the future. In addition, this study only takes the wechat circle of friends of college students as an example, not including a larger group of users, nor can it represent the entire social media circle. In the future, a larger group of users and other social media platforms can be explored and analyzed.

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