

Exploring Ideological and Political Education among College Students in the Self-Media Era from the Perspective of Cultural Confidence: A Case Study of Li Ziqi's Short Videos

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Abstract

This study adopts the lens of cultural confidence and takes Li Ziqi's return to self-media as a catalyst to explore innovative approaches to ideological and political education for college students in the self-media era. It examines the cultural value embedded in Li Ziqi's work and its role in fostering cultural confidence among students, analyses the distinctive features and influence of self-media on their ideological development, and proposes targeted strategies to enhance educational effectiveness by harnessing self-media cultural phenomena. The ultimate goal is to promote the holistic development of college students and to nurture their deep cultural literacy and sense of national identity.

Keywords

Self - media; Cultural confidence; Ideological and political education; Li Ziqi.

1. Introduction

General Secretary Xi Jinping has emphasised that "cultural confidence is a more fundamental, extensive, and profound confidence, and a more basic, profound, and enduring force." A prosperous culture leads to a prosperous country, and a strong culture leads to a strong country. Cultural confidence thus serves as a vital source of spiritual support for a country's and a nation's development.

In the self-media era, the transformation in modes of information dissemination has had a profound influence on the thinking and values of university students. Within this context, effectively conducting ideological and political education through self-media platforms has become a crucial issue.

As a prominent cultural icon in the realm of self-media, Li Ziqi's return has garnered widespread attention. The rich traditional Chinese cultural elements in her works provide a unique perspective for the research on college students' ideological and political education and are of great significance for cultivating their cultural confidence and ideological and political qualities.

2. The Multidimensional Value of Cultural Confidence in College Students' Ideological and Political Education

General Secretary Xi Jinping has pointed out that "Cultural confidence reflects a nation's, a state's, and a political party's firm belief in the strength of its own cultural ideals, values, vitality, and creative capacity."^[1] It embodies an organic fusion of advanced socialist culture, revolutionary culture, and the finest elements of traditional Chinese culture. ^[2]This confidence carries the deepest spiritual aspirations of the Chinese people and serves as a distinctive symbol of national identity.

As the future of the country and the hope of the nation, young people are the key subjects of cultural confidence. It is therefore of vital importance that ideological and political education for university students places cultural confidence at its core.

2.1. Cultivating National Spirit and Strengthening Cultural Identity

Cultural confidence provides a profound cultural and spiritual foundation for the ideological and political education of university students. It enables them to gain a deeper understanding of the values embedded in traditional Chinese culture, revolutionary culture, and advanced socialist thought. Through studying and inheriting these culture, students can strengthen their sense of identity and pride in Chinese civilisation, thereby fostering sound values and a well-grounded cultural outlooks.

2.2. Enriching Educational Content and Supplementing Ideological and Political Teaching Materials

Cultural confidence encompasses a wealth of connotations, including the recognition of the uniqueness of traditional Chinese culture, a deep understanding of historical development, and an openness to cultural diversity. Core values such as benevolence and integrity, and the ideal of “self-cultivation, family harmony, state governance, and world peace”, alongside patriotic figures like Qu Yuan, known for his unwavering loyalty, and Su Wu, celebrated for his steadfast integrity, offer vivid examples for ideological and political education. Revolutionary ideals such as the Red Boat Spirit, the Long March Spirit, and the Yan’an Spirit also serve as powerful resources. Collectively, these cultural elements help university students better comprehend and inherit the richness of Chinese tradition, thereby reinforcing their cultural confidence.

2.3. Improving Comprehensive Qualities and Stimulating Innovation Ability

Cultural confidence is not merely an emotional expression but also a deep form of cognitive recognition and self-identity. Within the context of traditional Chinese culture, it is reflected in pride and confidence in one’s own values, historical traditions, and cultural deposits. Such confidence inspires university students to innovate while preserving and promoting outstanding cultural traditions, thereby contributing to the continued development and flourishing of Chinese culture.

3. Characteristics and Challenges of College Students' Ideological and Political Education in the Self - media Era

3.1. Characteristics of Self - media in College Students' Ideological and Political Education

1. Instantaneity and Extensiveness of Information Dissemination

Self-media platforms transcend the temporal and spatial constraints of traditional information dissemination. The delivery of ideological and political education to university students is no longer confined to schoolteachers and ideological educators. Today, each student can share their own interpretations and reflections on ideological content, or repost valuable educational materials via their self-media accounts, such as Weibo, WeChat Official Accounts, and TikTok. In addition, a range of social organisations and academic groups actively participate in the dissemination process, enabling ideological and political content to spread rapidly and significantly broadening its reach.

2. Diversity and Interest of Content Presentation

Self-media delivers ideological and political education in a more vivid and engaging manner through formats such as video, audio, and image-text. Unlike traditional didactic approaches,

self-media captures the interest of university students through animations, storytelling, and situational skits, thereby enhancing their willingness to engage with such content.

Beyond its rich formats, self-media also offers a diverse range of content types that are more readily accepted by students. For instance, visually appealing comics can be used to explain ideological theories, while short videos can narrate revolutionary stories, rendering serious Party history more accessible through animated storytelling. By integrating historical documents, interviews, and on-site investigations into short video productions, self-media enables the delivery of multi-dimensional and immersive ideological education—helping students gain a more thorough and nuanced understanding of historical figures and revolutionary spirit.

3.2. Challenges Faced by Ideological and Political Education in the Self - media Era

1. Complex Value Orientation

Self-media platforms convey a broad spectrum of values—while many promote constructive, mainstream ideologies, others disseminate more problematic notions such as individualism, materialism, and hedonism. These are often conveyed through short videos that glorify extravagant lifestyles or articles that endorse extreme individualism, which can readily distort the value orientation of university students.

Some self-media creators generate sensationalist and false information under the pretext of "exposing the truth" to attract attention, often distorting ideological and political topics. This misrepresentation can confuse students, undermine their understanding, and disrupt their ideological development.

Furthermore, in the context of a complex international environment, certain Western ideologies carrying implicit biases also infiltrate self-media channels. For example, content that idealises Western political systems while belittling Chinese culture may lead students to misinterpret national history and social values, thereby hindering the formation of sound and rational values.

2. Tendency of Entertainment - Oriented Content

Self-media content increasingly exhibits a marked tendency towards entertainment. Light-hearted, humorous short videos and celebrity gossip are more likely to attract high levels of traffic and public attention. This entertainment-driven atmosphere leads many university students to favour recreational content over more serious material.

Consequently, ideological and political education content—often perceived by students as "too political" or "boring"—receives considerably less attention. Without engaging presentation or creative delivery, such content is easily drowned out in the overwhelming flood of entertainment media, making it difficult to capture students' interest or provoke meaningful engagement.

3. Challenges to Knowledge Authority

In the self-media era, university students are no longer solely reliant on teachers as their primary source of knowledge. Instead, they access a wide range of information and perspectives via self-media platforms, where content is updated rapidly. In some cases, students may even encounter emerging ideological and political issues through self-media before they are addressed in the classroom—posing a challenge to the traditional authority of teachers in knowledge transmission.

Moreover, certain self-media bloggers claim to be "high - level intellectuals" and attract a large number of students' attention with their "unique" viewpoints and insights. These perspectives may diverge significantly from the content of formal ideological and political education. Once students adopt such views uncritically, they may begin to question or even reject the instruction

provided by their teachers, thereby undermining the credibility and effectiveness of formal education in this domain.

4. The Cultural Value of Li Ziqi's Works and Their Impact on College Students' Ideological and Political Education

Li Ziqi began producing short videos in 2015, sharing them on platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Bilibili. By November 2024, she had amassed over 20 million followers and released 145 videos, primarily centred around four themes: traditional cuisine, handicrafts, rural life, and cultural inheritance. After a hiatus beginning in 2021, she announced her return to self-media on 13 November 2024 with the video “Carved Lacquer Hidden Flowers: Carving out a Purple and Auspicious Future!”

Her comeback drew widespread attention from both the media and the public, particularly among university students. More than a simple return, it was widely regarded as a statement of cultural confidence and a seamless blend of tradition and modernity. [3]Through her distinctive “slow-paced” and “meticulous” style, Li Ziqi presents to the world the richness of Chinese cultural heritage and exemplifies the power of Chinese cultural confidence.

4.1. Presenting Traditional Culture and Values

Li Ziqi's videos showcase the production processes of traditional crafts such as ancient papermaking, Shu embroidery, and traditional soy sauce brewing. Through visually stunning imagery and engaging storytelling, she brings traditional culture to life, enabling viewers to intuitively appreciate its beauty and significance.

By portraying rural life marked by the rhythm of “rising at dawn and resting at dusk,” her videos offer both domestic and international audiences a glimpse into the tranquillity, simplicity, and authenticity of the Chinese countryside. They also reflect the deep-rooted respect the Chinese people have for nature, and their wisdom in coexisting harmoniously with it. Furthermore, these works convey traditional Chinese virtues such as diligence, gratitude, and filial piety—values that can guide university students in forming sound family and social perspectives, and in fostering harmonious interpersonal relationships^[4].

4.2. Enhancing National and Cultural Identity

Effectively telling Chinese stories is key to promoting the international dissemination of Chinese culture, including narratives of China's development and its rich cultural heritage. Li Ziqi's success represents a milestone in bringing traditional Chinese culture to a broad audience in a non-political, non-propagandistic context.

For university students, her content—free from overt political messaging—delivers high-quality, emotionally resonant cultural narratives. These align with the growing cultural awareness and renewed interest in tradition among young people, evoking a deep sense of national pride and affection.

In the context of globalisation, the influence of Western culture has, to some extent, weakened some students' connection with their native heritage. By showcasing the depth and breadth of Chinese civilisation, Li Ziqi's work reignites cultural appreciation, strengthens students' cultural identity and sense of belonging, and lays a vital foundation for the cultivation of cultural confidence.

4.3. Improving the Dissemination and Inheritance Ability of Chinese Culture

Li Ziqi's videos skilfully integrate traditional Chinese cultural symbols, enriching their cultural depth and showcasing the distinctive charm of Chinese culture to a global audience. Her signature style makes her highly recognisable on international self-media platforms, helping to dismantle stereotypes held by foreign viewers about Chinese culture.

Her success prompts university students to recognise the prominent role of Chinese culture in global cultural exchange, bolstering their confidence in its value and sparking enthusiasm for preserving and promoting cultural traditions. Moreover, Li Ziqi serves as a role model, inspiring students to actively engage in cultural dissemination through self-media and contribute to strengthening the nation's cultural soft power.

5. Strategies for Strengthening College Students' Ideological and Political Education Based on Li Ziqi's Return to the Self-media

5.1. Harnessing Cultural Resources to Enrich Ideological and Political Education

To counter the entertainment-oriented tendency of ideological and political education content in the self-media era, educators in colleges and universities should make full use of the "Great Ideological and Political Course" framework by deeply exploring the cultural elements embedded in Li Ziqi's work and other exemplary self-media productions, and integrating them into formal educational curricula.

For instance, themed discussions centred on traditional virtues such as diligence and perseverance—as exemplified in Li Ziqi's videos—can help guide students in forming sound outlooks on life and values. Analysing the traditional soy sauce brewing process portrayed in her work can offer students insight into the historical continuity and craftsmanship behind Chinese culinary techniques. Likewise, rural scenes that reflect the Chinese people's reverence for nature and the principle of harmonious coexistence can enhance students' understanding of traditional culture on a deeper level.

5.2. Utilizing Self-media Platforms to Innovate Ideological and Political Education Modes

1. Exploring the "Traditional Culture + Ideological and Political Education" Integration Mode

In line with the "Outline for the Dissemination of Traditional Culture", which advocates the creative transformation and innovative development of outstanding traditional Chinese culture, universities can draw inspiration from successful models such as "Traditional Culture + Games" in "Black Myth: Wukong" and "Traditional Culture + Short Videos" as exemplified in Li Ziqi's work.

Institutions may consider establishing self-media accounts dedicated to ideological and political education and producing high-quality short video content in this domain. By drawing on uplifting campus stories to create engaging material, they can capture students' interest and encourage their active participation. Furthermore, incorporating formats such as live-streamed lectures and interactive sessions can enhance communication with students and significantly improve the effectiveness of ideological and political education.

2. Combining the "Great Ideological and Political Course" with Reality

General Secretary Xi Jinping has emphasised that "Ideological and political courses should be closely integrated with social life, enabling effective interaction between academic instruction and practical experience." Li Ziqi's persona and works have considerable influence among university students, offering a valuable opportunity to enhance their ideological and political education.^[5]

Colleges and universities can organise experiential activities that allow students to engage with traditional crafts featured in Li Ziqi's videos. Through hands-on participation, students can appreciate the aesthetic value of traditional craftsmanship and understand the challenges involved in its preservation. In line with the objectives of the "Hundred-Thousand-Million

Project”, institutions can also encourage students to take part in rural cultural revitalisation initiatives—such as conducting field research, planning cultural events in rural communities, and promoting intangible cultural heritage. These practices not only aid in preserving local traditions but also deepen students’ understanding of rural culture and foster a stronger sense of social responsibility.

5.3. Cultivating Media Literacy and Improving Cultural Discrimination Ability

In the self-media era, information circulates rapidly and is often complex and diverse, making university students particularly susceptible to harmful or misleading content. Colleges, universities, and educators should therefore guide students in cultivating critical thinking skills and developing the ability to rationally evaluate self-media and internet celebrity culture.

When engaging with Li Ziqi’s content, for example, students should be encouraged to reflect on the cultural value and social significance of her work, while also remaining alert to the vulgar or false information disseminated by certain internet personalities seeking online traffic. Offering dedicated media literacy courses can help students identify the authenticity of information and assess the value orientations underlying it.

Educators should also guide students to view self-media phenomena such as Li Ziqi’s work in a balanced manner—recognising their cultural contribution while being mindful of potential commercial packaging. Approaches such as case analysis can effectively enhance students’ critical thinking towards cultural information, enabling them to “take the essence and discard the dross,” better absorb the richness of high-quality cultural content, and strengthen their own cultural confidence.

5.4. Establishing Sound Values and Strengthening Self-management Ability

Teachers should guide college students in establishing sound values, clarifying their life goals and aspirations, and helping them realize that success can only be achieved through personal effort and perseverance. True value lies not in the pursuit of fame, wealth, or fortune, but in contributing meaningfully to society. At the same time, students should strengthen their self-management skills when using social media platforms. On one hand, they need to manage their time and energy effectively. Teachers can assist students in creating well-structured study plans and life schedules to prevent excessive indulgence in social media and internet celebrity culture from interfering with their academic and personal lives. On the other hand, students should be educated to adhere to ethical online behavior, surf the internet responsibly, avoid spreading harmful content and jointly creating a healthy and harmonious network environment to achieve their own growth and development

6. Conclusion

In the context of cultural confidence, Li Ziqi’s return to self-media platforms presents new opportunities for the ideological and political education of college students. We must fully recognize the unique characteristics and challenges of ideological and political education in the self-media era, actively explore the positive aspects of self-media culture, and effectively leverage self-media to inject vitality into the ideological and political education of college students. This approach will help cultivate a new generation of talents with strong cultural confidence.

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