



The role of national defense and security education for students in the context of current social media's impact

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Abstract

In the context of digital transformation and the rapid growth of social media, students increasingly have opportunities to access information related to national defense and security. Social media contributes to spreading rapidly the Party's guidelines and the State's policies and laws, while fostering a spirit of patriotism and raising awareness regarding the task of national defense. However, this environment also harbors risks stemming from fake news, misinformation, distorted viewpoints, and subversive content, which can impact students' perceptions, beliefs, and responsibility. The paper focuses on clarifying the concepts of social media and national defense and security awareness, while also analyzing the role of national defense and security education for students in the digital environment. The results indicate that national defense and security education plays a crucial role in fostering patriotism, political steadfastness, and a sense of responsibility, as well as the ability to identify and verify information. Thereby, it contributes to fostering a young generation with the mettle, sense of responsibility, and capability to participate in defending the Fatherland in both the physical world and cyberspace.

Keywords: Social media, national defense and security education, students, national defense and security awareness, digital transformation, cybersecurity

Introduction

In the area of national defense and security, social media offers various opportunities to disseminate the guidelines and directives of the Party as well as the policies and laws of the Party and the State; to promote patriotism and the defense of territorial, maritime, and island sovereignty; and to enable students to rapidly access official information regarding the domestic and international defense and security. Through modern communication formats such as short videos, infographics, podcasts, and digital campaigns, contents regarding national defense and security education have become increasingly engaging and compelling, helping to raise students' awareness and sense of responsibility toward the cause of national construction and defense. Students are a young intellectual force, a source of high-quality human resources for the country, and are one of the key target groups for national defense and security education. This is a group that uses social media frequently and is easily influenced by online media trends. Without adequate knowledge of politics and the law, digital skills, and the ability to identify false information, students may suffer negative impacts on their awareness, beliefs, and civic responsibility regarding the task of defending the Fatherland.

Studying the role of social media in shaping students' awareness of national defense and security holds not only theoretical significance - by providing a scientific basis for research into national defense and security education in the digital age - but also practical significance in proposing solutions to enhance the quality of such education, building "resilience" against toxic online content, thereby contributing to safeguarding the Party's ideological foundation and strengthening the younger generation's sense of responsibility toward the cause of national construction and defense.

Contents

1. The concept of social networks

In a broad sense, social networks or social media are online platforms built upon internet infrastructure that allow users to create personal accounts, connect with other individuals or communities, and share, exchange, and interact with various types of contents—such as text, images, audio, video, and other forms of multimedia. Unlike traditional media, which conveys information in only one-dimension, social media creates a multi-dimensional communication environment where each user acts as both a recipient of information and a creator and disseminator of content. Currently, students frequently use various social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and Zalo..., each with its own distinct characteristics. Facebook excels at building community, sharing information, and hosting discussion groups; TikTok thrives thanks to highly entertaining short-form videos and rapid virality; YouTube serves as a video-sharing platform offering a wealth of educational resources and information; Instagram focuses on imagery, short videos, and personal branding; while Zalo functions as both a messaging app and a tool for information exchange, effectively supporting education, work, and domestic connectivity. It is precisely the diversity of content delivery formats that has made social media a vital source of information for students in their studies and entertainment and updating political, economic, cultural, and social issues, as well as matters of national defense and security. Social networks have several distinctive characteristics:

Information spreads very rapidly: In a short span of time, an article or video can reach millions of users through mechanisms of sharing, commenting, and automated recommendations. This characteristic contributes to the rapid dissemination of official information but also

facilitates the spread of fake news and misinformation if left unverified.

High level of interactivity: Users do not merely receive information passively; they can also comment, share, express their views, create content, and participate in online discussions. This contributes to facilitating the exchange of information, but at the same time, increases also increases the likelihood of the formation and spread of extremist views or unverified information.

Operating based on a content recommendation algorithm: Social media platforms use artificial intelligence (AI) and user behavioral data to select, organize, and recommend contents that match each individual's interests, needs, and usage habits. This mechanism makes it easy for users to access information that interests them, but it can also create "echo chamber", which exposes users only to similar viewpoints and limits their access to diverse perspectives.

Personalization of information: The content displayed on each account varies, but it is adjusted based on each user's search history, views, interactions, and social connections. As a result, the user experience is enhanced; however, this simultaneously increases the risk of users being guided by information flows designed to steer opinion or manipulate public sentiment, particularly if they lack the skills to analyze and verify the information.

Given these characteristics, the Law on National Defense (No. 22/2018/QH14, dated June 8, 2018, effective from January 1, 2019) ^[1] stipulates that learners must "meet the standard for basic information technology skills" ^[2], as social media serves both as an effective communication tool for education, advocacy, and knowledge dissemination and as a space harboring significant risks regarding information and ideological security. For students, social media directly influences the formation of their awareness, values, beliefs, and attitudes regarding political, national defense, and security issues.

2. Awareness of national defense and security

Awareness is the process of reflecting objective reality into human thought, through which individuals acquire knowledge, form viewpoints, attitudes, and orientate behavior regarding the objects and phenomena of social life. In the area of national defense and security, awareness extends beyond merely understanding the Party's guidelines and the State's policies and laws; but is also reflected in the political belief, sense of responsibility, and actions of each individual towards the cause of national construction and defense. For students, awareness of national defense and security is understood as their understanding, attitudes, beliefs, sense of responsibility, and behaviors regarding issues related to national defense, national security, and the task of defending the Fatherland in the new situation. This is the result of a process involving education, self-study, practical experience, and the intake of information from various sources, among which social media plays an increasingly important role. Students' awareness of national defense and security is composed of five fundamental elements:

Knowledge: the foundation of awareness - is reflected in the extent of students' understanding regarding the Party's viewpoints and guidelines, as well as State policies and laws concerning national defense and security; the nation's traditions of building and defending the country; the positions and roles of all-people national defense, people's security, and the people's armed forces; and traditional and non-traditional security challenges in the context of international integration and digital transformation.

Attitude: reflects students' assessments, sentiments, and viewpoints regarding national defense and security issues. A correct understanding shapes positive attitudes, such as respect for the law, appreciation of the nation's historical values, and support for policies protecting national sovereignty along with a commitment to countering misinformation and distorted narratives in cyberspace.

Belief: a factor that provides direction – reflects students' trust in the leadership of the Party, the management of the State, the strength of the all-people national defense and people's security, as well as the core role of the armed forces in the cause of defending the nation's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Firm political conviction enables students to recognize and resist wrongful and hostile views.

Responsibility: demonstrated through a spirit of legal compliance and the fulfillment of civic duties; active participation in national defense and security education activities; the maintenance of security and order within the local community and at school; and responsible use of social media.

Behavior: students proactively seek knowledge regarding national defense and security; use social media responsibly; refrain from sharing or disseminating unverified information; actively disseminate official information; participate in countering erroneous viewpoints; and contribute to safeguarding the Party's ideological foundation and maintaining national security in cyberspace. Student's awareness of national defense and security focuses on the core issues of the cause of national construction and defense. Awareness of national sovereignty and territorial integrity, including an understanding of national sovereignty over land, waters, airspace, and national borders, as well as sovereignty over seas and islands. Recognizing the sacred significance of independence and sovereignty, as well as the responsibility of every citizen to safeguard national interests. Students need to possess a proper understanding of national security and clearly comprehend the threats posed to both traditional and non-traditional security such as cybersecurity, economic security, cultural security, information security, terrorism, high-tech crime, and subversive activities in cyberspace. This helps students enhance their ability to prevent, identify, and respond to threats affecting national security.

Students need to understand that the "all-people national defense" and "people's security" are two strategic pillars in the cause of defending the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, which is built upon the foundation of harnessing the combined strength of the entire population, the entire military and the entire political system under the leadership of the Party. The core role of the People's Army and the

People's Public Security in carrying out national defense tasks and ensuring national security. Awareness of national defense and security also encompasses an understanding of the mission to safeguard the Fatherland in the new situation, linked to the requirements of protecting independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity; protecting the Party, the State, the People, and the socialist regime; safeguarding national interests; and maintaining a peaceful and stable environment for national development. For students, this is demonstrated by strengthening their political steadfastness and revolutionary vigilance, using cyberspace responsibly, and proactively countering false and hostile information, thereby contributing to building a solid "people's heart posture" in the context of digital transformation.

This is not only a key objective of national defense and security education in higher education institutions but also a foundation for shaping students' political steadfastness, civic consciousness, and sense of responsibility toward the cause of national construction and defense in the context of globalization and the rapid expansion of cyberspace.

3. The role of national defense and security education for students

National defense and security education is a vital component of the national education system; it plays a key role in equipping learners with fundamental knowledge regarding the Party's defense and security guidelines and the State's policies and laws, while also fostering the political steadfastness, sense of responsibility, and necessary skills to participate in the cause of national construction and defense. Article 4 of the Law on National Defense and Security Education stipulates: "Educating citizens on national defense and security knowledge serves to foster patriotism, the tradition of nation-building and national defense, and a sense of national pride and self-respect; it also raises awareness and a sense of responsibility, the voluntary fulfillment of national defense and security duties and the protection of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam ^[1]." For students—who represent the nation's young intellectual force and high-quality human resources—national defense and security education not only enhances their understanding of these matters but also lays the foundation for their comprehensive development in terms of ideology, ethics, and civic responsibility in the context of international integration and digital transformation.

National defense and security education, plays a vital role in shaping, fostering, and promoting patriotism and national pride among students – a young intellectual force that holds a crucial position in the cause of national construction and defense in the new era. By studying the Vietnamese nation's history of struggle for national construction and defense, the glorious feats of past generations, the heroic traditions of the Vietnam People's Army and the Vietnam People's Public Security, as well as the achievements made in building the all-people national defense and the people's security posture, students gain a deeper understanding of the sacred values of independence, freedom, national sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Accessing this content not only helps learners fully appreciate the immense sacrifices and losses endured by previous generations to secure and safeguard national independence, but also fosters a sense of pride and a deep appreciation for the achievements of the revolution. As a result, patriotism is not only rooted in emotion but also

reinforced by sound political awareness, steadfastness, and civic responsibility. This serves as a crucial foundation for each student to clearly define their responsibilities regarding academic study, personal development, scientific research, and legal compliance, actively participate in social activities and stand ready to contribute their intellect and youthful energy to the cause of building, developing, and firmly defending the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

By studying the Party's viewpoints and guidelines, as well as the State's policies and laws regarding national defense, security, and the protection of the Fatherland, students gain a fuller understanding of the rights, obligations, and responsibilities of citizens in the cause of national construction and defense. The education not only imparts knowledge but also fosters positive attitudes, a spirit of voluntary compliance with the Constitution and the law, a sense of respect for discipline and responsibility toward the community, and a readiness to participate in activities serving national defense and security whenever the Fatherland requires it. Moreover, it encourages students to actively participate in movements to safeguard national security, and build a safe, civilized, and united school environment; it also helps them to take the initiative in preventing and combating unlawful acts, social evils, and risks affecting security and public order at the grassroots level. In the context of digital transformation and the rapid expansion of cyberspace, students demonstrate their sense of responsibility by using social media in a civilized manner and in compliance with the law; this includes verifying information before sharing it, refraining from spreading fake news, and avoiding complicity in activities that distort history, incite ethnic division, or infringe upon national interests. As hostile forces increasingly escalate their subversive activities in cyberspace with many sophisticated methods, cultivating political steadfastness enables students to accurately assess the nature of socio-political issues and remain unwavering in the face of distorted or inflammatory information, as well as rhetoric that seeks to deny the achievements of the revolution and the socialist system in Vietnam.

National defense and security education not only, provides knowledge regarding the defense of the Fatherland, national security, and non-traditional security, but also helps equip students with critical thinking skills and the ability to analyze, evaluate, and filter information in a scientific manner. Through their studies, students hone skills in verifying sources, cross-referencing information from multiple authoritative channels, and identifying signs of fake news and digitally-generated-or-altered contents, as well as tactics that exploit social media algorithms to manipulate public opinion, shape perceptions, and incite social instability. Students enhance their awareness of personal data protection and the safe, responsible use of social media, while complying with legal regulations on cybersecurity. Developing these competencies not only enables students to pro-actively protect themselves against digital threats but also contributes to fostering a healthy information environment and strengthening society's resilience against subversive activities in cyberspace.

Through national defense and security education, students are equipped with foundational knowledge regarding Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh Thought, the Party's viewpoints and guidelines on national defense and security, the strategy for safeguarding the Fatherland in the new

context, and issues related to non-traditional security and cybersecurity. This is a crucial foundation for learners to cultivate political steadfastness and reinforce their belief in the goal of national independence associated with socialism, while simultaneously enhancing their ability to analyze and evaluate socio-political issues on a scientific and objective basis. The learning process also helps students clearly understand the nature, objectives, and methods of activities that exploit cyberspace to undermine the Party's ideological foundation, thereby enhancing their ability to recognize such content and adopt an appropriate stance when faced with diverse information. Students are encouraged to use social media in a civilized and responsible manner, prioritize access to and the sharing of information from official sources, while actively spreading positive values, exemplary role models, beneficial actions, and achievements in the cause of national construction and development. Each student is not merely a recipient of information but also an active, responsible participant in building a healthy information environment, strengthening society's resilience against harmful content, and reinforcing public trust in the Party and the State, while actively contributing to the firm defense of the Party's ideological foundation and the protection of the Vietnamese Fatherland in the digital era.

In the context of digital transformation, national defense and security education must go beyond the mere transmission of knowledge; it needs to focus on developing comprehensive competencies in students—including digital literacy, critical thinking skills, and the ability to adapt to non-traditional security challenges. This requires significant innovation in teaching content, methods, and organizational formats by combining traditional education with digital platforms, enhancing interaction and experiment, and fostering skills for safe and responsible social media use. Therefore, national defense and security education continues to affirm its important role in shaping a generation of students who possess patriotism, steadfast political mettle, and a strong sense of responsibility and are fully capable of participating in the defense of the Fatherland across both physical world and cyberspace.

Conclusion

In digital transformation, extensive international integration, and the rapid expansion of cyberspace, national defense and security education increasingly affirms its vital role in shaping and developing students' qualities and competencies, thereby contributing to meeting the demands of national construction and defense in the new situation. By equipping students with knowledge regarding national defense and security, the Party's guidelines and policies, State laws and regulations, and issues concerning both traditional and non-traditional security, national defense and security education not only fosters patriotism, national pride, and a sense of civic responsibility but also helps cultivate political steadfastness, a sense of law observance, and social responsibility among students. In the face of rising cyber security threats, such as fake news, misinformation, and erroneous or hostile viewpoints as well as the negative impacts of digital technology..., national defense and security education has emerged as an important educational channel. It helps students enhance their digital literacy and critical thinking skills, improves their ability to identify and process information, and fosters the safe,

responsible, and lawful use of social media. Building upon their political awareness and acquired skills, students can proactively disseminate official information, refute distorted narratives with scientifically grounded arguments, thereby contributing to safeguarding the Party's ideological foundation, maintaining ideological security, and developing a healthy information environment.

However, to fully promote the role of national defense and security education in the new context, it is necessary to continue innovating content, curricula, and teaching methods by linking theory with practice, enhancing the application of digital technology, utilizing real-world scenarios in cyberspace, and developing learners' critical thinking and digital skills. At the same time, it is essential to strengthen coordination among schools, families, state management agencies, armed forces, and socio-political organizations in educating, guiding, and supporting students to use cyberspace safely, civilly, and responsibly. It can be affirmed that national defense and security education is not merely a mandatory component of the university curriculum but also a strategic educational solution aimed at fostering a generation of Vietnamese students characterized by patriotism, steadfast political mettle, digital proficiency, civic responsibility, and the ability to adapt to the challenges of the times. This is a crucial foundation for developing a high-quality workforce, contributing to the successful realization of the goal of building and firmly defending the socialist Fatherland of Vietnam in the country's new era of development.

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