Awareness of Rights among College Students: The Overstepping of Rights Leading to Doxxing

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Abstract: Currently, the act of doxxing transcends both the virtual and real realms, emerging as a significant form for young people, including college students, to voice their opinions and safeguard their rights. However, the motivation behind this behavior often manifests as venting anger, attracting attention, and seeking entertainment. In essence, the act of naming and shaming online embodies a desire for the redistribution of benefits, an expectation of correction following a loss of interests, or an improper claim for obtaining additional benefits. As interests are at the core of rights, the various intentions and methods behind online naming and shaming are closely linked to conflicts of interest, directly reflecting college students' disregard for established norms between personal and others' interests, as well as a cognitive perception of rights that prioritizes personal interests over those of society.

1. Introduction

In the context of the digital age, the internet has become an indispensable part of daily life. This is particularly true for the college student demographic, for whom the internet serves not only as a platform for obtaining information and engaging in academic discourse but also as a critical channel for expressing opinions and venting emotions. However, when personal emotions or conflicts cannot be resolved through rational communication, some college students tend to resort to doxxing—publicly disclosing others' personal information, photographs, chat records, etc.—to exact revenge or exert pressure. Although such behavior may superficially appear to be an exercise of individual rights, it actually transcends reasonable limits and constitutes an infringement on the legitimate rights of others. This article will delve into this phenomenon from multiple perspectives, exploring the importance and pathways for rectifying college students' awareness of rights.

2. Current Situation and Problems of College Students' Awareness of Rights

2.1 Awakening of Rights Awareness and Misconceptions

Currently, college students generally exhibit a strong awareness of their rights and are proactive in defending their legal interests. However, this awareness sometimes devolves into an excessive form of egocentrism, neglecting the balance between rights and obligations, as well as the boundaries of exercising those rights[1].Some students perceive the expression of personal emotions as an exercise of free speech, failing to recognize the potential harm their actions may inflict upon others.

As benefits are the core content of rights, doxxing for different purposes and means is closely related to conflicts of interest and directly reflects college students' understanding of their rights.

2.1.1 Tendency toward Egocentrism

Many college students, when confronted with conflicts, tend to focus solely on their own feelings and interests while overlooking the positions and rights of others. Driven by self-centered thinking, they use the internet as a battleground to protect their personal interests, simplifying the understanding of rights to prioritize their specific interests above the arbitrary interests of others. Some students post offensive comments on social media or even publicly disclose other people's private information in hopes of gaining sympathy and support from others. Such actions not only infringe upon the privacy rights and reputational rights of the targeted individuals but may also result in more severe psychological trauma. Furthermore, this egocentrism manifests itself in the misuse of online spaces. Some students consider the internet as a domain where they can freely express opinions, disregarding the social implications and legal responsibilities associated with their online discourse.

2.1.2 Imbalance between Rights and Responsibilities

The realization of personal freedom of action is conditional upon the fulfillment of obligations by others. Under this principle, university students apply a double standard, manifesting two modes of thinking: on one hand, personal freedom of action must not be obstructed, and the fulfillment of others' obligations must be both complete and timely, leaving virtually no room for negotiation; on the other hand, whether others' freedom of action can be realized depends on individual subjective will and objective reality, providing substantial leeway for negotiation. Under such double standards, conflicts between individual rights become widespread and intense, and the relationship between exercising one's rights and fulfilling obligations is thoroughly imbalanced. Some students post false statements online, damaging others' right to reputation, yet fail to realize that they bear corresponding legal responsibilities. This imbalance also manifests in the use of public resources. Some students occupy a significant amount of public resources online, posting irrelevant content or maliciously attacking others, affecting the normal user experience of others.

2.1.3 Weak Legal Awareness

Despite the enactment of various laws and regulations aimed at regulating online behavior in China, many college students remain largely uninformed about them. For example, the Cybersecurity Law of the People's Republic of China explicitly prohibits the illegal acquisition, sale, or provision of personal information. Nonetheless, some students continue to ignore these stipulations and carelessly disclose others' private information. Additionally, a sense of impunity prevails among some students, leading them to believe their actions will go undetected or unpunished. This mindset further emboldens them in the online space, exacerbating the incidence of online violence.

2.2 The Rise and Harms of Doxxing

Doxxing is a typical phenomenon of social and online interaction currently, referring to the act where an individual (perceived) that their rights have been infringed upon by a specific entity, and as a form of venting or seeking justice, publicly posts the information and behaviors of that specific entity on online platforms. This often accompanies emotional verbal attacks, malicious speculation, and personal threats. Such behavior not only infringes upon the doxxed individual's privacy and reputational rights but may also subject them to psychological stress, social isolation, or even more severe psychological trauma[2].Additionally, the prevalence of cyberbullying disrupts the

harmonious atmosphere of cyberspace and affects the overall moral standards of society.

2.2.1 Invasion of Privacy Rights

Doxxing typically involves the public disclosure of individuals' private information, such as their names, phone numbers, and addresses. Once this information falls into the hands of malicious actors, it may be used for fraudulent activities, harassment, or other criminal offenses, posing significant safety risks to the targeted individuals. Additionally, the public exposure of private information can undermine the social networks of those targeted, leading to discrimination and ostracism in real life. For instance, some students who are doxxed may lose the trust of friends and peers, which could adversely impact their academic performance and employment opportunities.

2.2.2 Infringement of Reputational Rights

The act of doxxing is often accompanied by a barrage of negative comments and malicious speculation that can severely damage the reputation of the targeted individuals. For example, some students may find themselves publicly vilified due to a minor error, leading to widespread condemnation and a tarnished reputation. Such an infringement on reputational rights can not only affect the mental health of the targeted individuals but also have detrimental effects on their future career prospects. Some employers may review applicants' online records during the hiring process, and discovering negative information could result in the rejection of the candidate[3].

2.2.3 Psychological Pressure and Trauma

Doxxing can impose immense psychological pressure on those targeted. For example, some students may experience extreme anxiety or depression as a result of being doxxed, with some even developing suicidal tendencies. This psychological pressure can adversely affect their academic and personal lives and may also have severe repercussions for their families. Furthermore, doxxing can lead to social isolation for the affected individuals. Some students may find themselves ostracized by their peers, losing their normal social circles and enduring prolonged periods of loneliness. Such isolation can not only impact their mental well-being but may also trigger additional societal issues.

2.2.4 Destruction of Social Morality

The proliferation of doxxing behaviors can erode the moral standards of society as a whole. For instance, some students may come to view resolving issues through online means as acceptable, thereby disregarding legal and ethical constraints. Once this mindset takes root, it poses a significant threat to social harmony and stability. Additionally, doxxing can lead to a decline in social trust. Some students may refrain from expressing their genuine opinions online due to the fear of being doxxed, resulting in a proliferation of misinformation and rumors in cyberspace. This phenomenon not only disrupts the normal functioning of society but may also incite further social conflicts.

3. Psychological Motivations and Social Impact of College Students Resorting to Doxxing

3.1 Analysis of Psychological Motivations

First, the need for emotional release. College students are in the transitional phase from adolescence to adulthood. On one hand, they exhibit vitality and innovative traits; on the other hand, when faced with academic pressure, interpersonal relationship challenges, and uncertainties about future planning, they tend to accumulate negative emotions, display excessive self-awareness, and approach problem-solving and moral judgments from a self-centered perspective. When encountering

issues of damaged interests that cannot be resolved through competition or past social experiences, their behaviors shaped by the internet drive them to first seek online exposure as a quick and direct way to release inner dissatisfaction[4]. Online platforms, due to their anonymity, immediacy, and wide dissemination, have become the preferred outlet for many college students to vent their emotions[5].Through the act of doxxing they can publicize their inner dissatisfaction and anger without directly facing the consequences, gaining temporary psychological satisfaction.

Second, the desire for attention and validation. Attention has become an intangible form of capital, and many college students yearn to be seen and heard in the online world. When they post negative information about someone online, it often attracts a significant number of onlookers. This sudden influx of attention enhances their sense of self-worth. Furthermore, if the content resonates with others, they may receive support and agreement from netizens, further reinforcing their sense of belonging and validation. Motivated by this desire for attention and affirmation, some college students may increasingly resort to online means to address issues, occasionally surpassing the satisfaction derived from positive feedback.

Third, the drive for revenge. When college students perceive they have been treated unfairly or their rights have been violated, a sense of revenge often arises. They may believe that by publicizing someone else's private information or exposing aspects of their life that the individual wishes to keep hidden, they can inflict similar pain or embarrassment, thereby achieving psychological equilibrium. This retaliatory behavior disregards legal and ethical constraints, seeking only immediate gratification while potentially causing long-term harm to both themselves and others.

3.2 Assessment of Social Impact

First, deterioration of interpersonal relationships. Acts of doxxing often lead to a rapid deterioration of relationships, potentially resulting in larger interpersonal conflicts. Those targeted may feel betrayed and misunderstood, developing deep resentment toward the doxxers, while doxxers themselves may face condemnation and ostracism from those around them. This type of conflict, rooted in online interactions, is often difficult to resolve through face-to-face communication and may escalate due to the viral nature of online content, ultimately leading to a complete breakdown of social relationships.

Second, the blurring of legal boundaries. Over time, the prevalence of doxxing can lead to a blurred understanding of legal boundaries within society. As more individuals become accustomed to resolving issues through online means, they may gradually overlook the existence and enforceability of laws and regulations[6]. This not only increases the cost and difficulty of legal enforcement but also undermines social justice and equity. Every citizen should adhere to laws and regulations to maintain a good social order.

Third, incitement of public emotions. The frequent occurrence of doxxing not only disrupts order and safety in cyberspace but also poses threats to real-world safety. On one hand, the dissemination of negative information exacerbates societal anxiety and diminishes public trust in government and social institutions. On the other hand, extreme acts of online violence may escalate into offline conflicts or even collective incidents, severely challenging social stability. For example, several recent incidents of campus bullying triggered by doxxing illustrate this point.

4. The Necessity of Correcting College Students' Awareness of Rights and Policy Recommendations

Engaging in free and conscious mental activities is a natural human need, as is the awareness of rights. However, individuals' free and conscious activities are inseparable from their social environment and social relations. The essence of a person lies in the sum total of all their social

relations; therefore, to achieve harmonious coexistence between individuals, others, and society, the primary task is to establish a normative system that ensures the exercise of free will without harming the interests of others or society, with the highest form of such norms being moral principles. College students, as an extremely important and unique group within society, have their development of rights awareness profoundly impacting the progress of the entire society. Distorted perceptions of rights and excessive exercise of rights not only hinder university students from correctly safeguarding their own interests but may also weaken the control of social order, thereby increasing social risks. Cultivating correct awareness of rights requires a deep understanding of one's role in society and the interactive relationship between individuals and society. When personal expectations exceed what society can provide, or when social resources fail to meet individuals' legitimate needs, awareness of rights may fall into a state of chaos.

4.1 Strengthening Legal Education and Moral Guidance

Higher education institutions should enhance legal education and moral guidance for students, helping them understand the relationship between rights and obligations, as well as the boundaries and consequences of exercising their rights, thereby avoiding deviations and abuses of rights awareness. Methods such as case analysis and thematic lectures can be employed to bolster students' legal awareness and moral concepts, encouraging them to establish correct values and life perspectives. Simultaneously, students should be encouraged to actively resist the occurrence of online violence and undesirable behaviors, collectively maintaining the healthy and orderly development of cyberspace.

We should conduct legal education activities: Regularly invite experts from outside or law professors to give lectures to college students of all majors and grades to disseminate knowledge about relevant laws and regulations, thereby enhancing students' legal literacy.

For instance, experts or professors could explain the Cybersecurity Law of the People's Republic of China and the Civil Code, allowing students to understand the legal responsibilities and consequences of online infringement.

Teachers should organize thematic class meetings: Conduct class meetings focused on topics such as "How to Properly Exercise Rights" and "How to Avoid Online Violence," guiding students to reflect on and share their perspectives.

Through collective discussions, students can deepen their understanding of rights awareness and cultivate critical thinking skills.

Educators should utilize new media platforms: Use new media platforms like Weibo and WeChat to publish articles and videos related to legal education and moral guidance, expanding the reach of publicity and increasing student participation and interaction.

For example, a column could be established to introduce typical case analyses, highlighting the legal issues and moral considerations involved, guiding students to learn from these examples.

4.2 Establishing a Diversified Dispute Resolution Mechanism

Higher education institutions should develop a sound dispute mediation mechanism to provide students with diversified pathways for conflict resolution, helping them learn to handle disputes rationally and avoid resorting to extreme measures. At the same time, fostering a positive campus culture can create a friendly and harmonious atmosphere, encouraging students to face life's challenges and difficulties with a positive mindset. Additionally, establishing psychological counseling services can provide professional support to help students alleviate psychological stress and enhance their mental resilience.

We should establish psychological counseling services: Equip institutions with professional

counselors to offer one-on-one psychological counseling to students in need, assisting them in resolving psychological issues and alleviating stress.

For instance, group counseling activities can be organized, allowing students to share their experiences and feelings in a safe environment, supporting one another in mutual growth.

We should create Legal Aid Centers: Provide free legal consultation services to help students address legal issues encountered in their studies and lives, enabling them to understand their rights and obligations, as well as how to legally protect themselves.

For example, volunteer lawyers could offer legal advice to students on matters related to contract signing and labor rights.

Educators should conduct Mental Health Education: Utilize lectures and workshops to disseminate knowledge about mental health, enhancing students' psychological resilience and helping them build healthy mental states to cope with challenges and difficulties in life.

For instance, inviting psychology experts to discuss emotion management and interpersonal relationship strategies can aid students in better adapting to college life.

4.3 Cultivating a Healthy Online Culture

All sectors of society should work collaboratively to create a healthy and uplifting online culture, advocating for civil and rational internet usage while opposing online violence and undesirable behaviors. Activities such as online cultural festivals and the recognition of outstanding netizens can help establish positive role models and promote positive energy, guiding students to develop correct online values and behavioral habits. Additionally, enhancing media outreach can raise public awareness of online violence, increasing vigilance and prevention efforts to collectively maintain good order in cyberspace.

Schools should implement Internet Literacy Education: Increase the inclusion of internet literacy in school curricula, teaching students how to discern credible information and protect their privacy and data security, thereby improving their awareness of online safety.

For example, a dedicated course could be offered to cover basic internet security knowledge, including password protection and account safeguarding.

We should promote positive role models: Recognize individuals and stories that actively spread positive energy online through events such as online cultural festivals and awards for outstanding netizens, inspiring more people to contribute to the maintenance of a healthy online environment.

For example, an annual award could be established for the best online citizens, accompanied by recognition and incentives to encourage active participation in building a positive online culture.

Enhance Regulatory Measures: Government agencies should intensify oversight of online platforms, strictly cracking down on various illegal activities, particularly enhancing protections for minors to ensure they can grow up in a safe and healthy environment. For example, social media platforms could be mandated to strengthen the scrutiny of user-generated content, promptly identifying and removing harmful information to prevent its spread; simultaneously, supervision of minors' internet usage should be reinforced to prevent excessive gaming or exposure to inappropriate content.

5. Conclusion

As the future pillars of the nation, the cultivation and shaping of college students' awareness of rights are of paramount importance. In the face of the increasingly severe phenomenon of doxxing, we must adopt a multi-faceted approach to effectively curb its spread and promote the healthy development of college students as well as the harmonious and stable progress of society. By strengthening legal education and moral guidance, establishing diversified dispute resolution

mechanisms, and fostering a healthy online culture, we can guide students to correctly exercise their rights, handle conflicts rationally, and collectively maintain the healthy and orderly development of cyberspace. Only through these efforts can we collaboratively construct a harmonious and civilized online society, laying a solid foundation for the healthy growth of college students and the stable development of society.

Acknowledgement

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