

Causes and Countermeasures of Illegitimate Complaints from Parents in China's Education System —Case Study of "A Teacher's Corporal Punishment towards Her Student Resulting in Vomiting Blood" in Weibo

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Abstract: In the most popular Chinese social media Sina Microblog, which is called *Weibo*^a, a netizen complained an incident that "a teacher's corporal punishment towards her student which caused vomiting blood". The incident was widely followed and spread on *Weibo* but then proved to be fake. Though illegitimate content was issued, from the original intention of the one involved in the claim for rights protection, the reason for this illegitimate complaining behavior is more profound. On the one hand, there exists a lack of social credibility in China's education system and the phenomenon of stigmatized teachers, which leads to an urgent voice for the supervision of educational practitioners among the masses; on the other hand, the expression of China's civil rights and its communication channels need to be further improved to promote deep development of China's civil society. Therefore, the public power of education needs to be further standardized and the multi-level system of safeguarding education rights to be optimized, so as to promote the construction of civil society and to adapt to the latest trends of social development. Meanwhile, the Internet complaining system needs to be improved which means the increase of punishment for illegitimate accusations and defamation and promotion of the Internet legal ecosystem.

Keywords: illegitimate complaints, education, *Weibo*, civil society

1. Introduction

In China's social context, education has always been a focus of attention. China has a tradition which cherishes the value of education for thousands of years. Chinese Confucian cultural tradition emphasizes that "if you excel in learning, you will be an official", which means that a good education determines the future prospects. Meanwhile, compared with western family ethics, Chinese children often bear the expectation of their parents, and a child-centered life circle is formed in the family. In a sense, parents live for their children. Especially, since the implementation of China's family planning policy, the concept of "healthy birth and good care" has been gradually

^a *Weibo* is the most popular social media platforms of microblog in China, which is run by Sina corporation.

cultivated. Then, China's fertility rate began to decline, and the actual status of children in the family became more and more important. This reality pushed the issue of children's education to the front of the stage, and the field of education also became the focus of public opinion and news scene. While in a transition period of China, the relatively fragile social trust system and asymmetric information distribution lead to frequent vicious news in the education field. In this social context, it is worth noting that some parents complain illegitimate or false content when they complain about the bad relationship between family and school, which has aroused extensive and profound discussion in the society.

This paper will take a case study of a social news reported by a user of *Weibo*, a Chinese social platform, in City X of southern China^b, in which "A Teacher's Corporal Punishment towards Her Student Resulting in Vomiting Blood". The causes and characteristics of the incident will be studied, as well as its implications for future education construction and governance.

The innovation of this research lies in that it tries to discover the profound and understandable reasons for this seemingly incredible illegitimate complaint event, and strives to restore the parties' choices at that time from a humanized perspective.

2. Literature Review

At present, the recent Chinese research achievements focus on measures to clarifying the boundary between illegitimate complaints and legitimate complaints in the field of education. The research results can be divided into two categories:

One aspect of the research results is about the behaviour of "complaints". Illegitimate complaints in non-educational fields in Chinese research area are abundant and can be used for reference, most of which are related to the concept of "reporting". For example, in "Causes and treatment of the 'disorderly situation' reported by disciplinary inspection and supervision letters and visits" [1], it is pointed out that the reporting system of China is quite unique and it is fundamentally different from the western citizen complaint system. From the perspective of James S. Coleman's Rational-choice Theory, Li explains the rationality of individuals seeking the maximum benefits for their own interests when they complain, and points out the measures of governance for disorderly reportings, which provides a reference for the interpretation of complaint behaviors in the system of education. Also, many studies have investigated the cultural background of Chinese tip-off culture, as well as the influences and governance measures of malicious tip-off system in the Chinese context.

The other aspect of the research results is about the characteristics of new media such as *Weibo*. Some literature has studied the features of *Weibo* and other network platforms that play roles as public spaces in the context of new media in China. Some existing literature affirms the historical contribution of *Weibo* and other platforms to civil rights, public participation and political processes. Some literature studies the dissemination methods of socially influential events on *Weibo* and the specific themes that *Weibo*'s discourse focuses on. For example, in "Research on morphologic evolution from opinion to consensus in the field of network" [2], Liu points out that in the field of network, the competition of different discourses are related to the game of capital, power and other social factors. In this research, several common themes of social justice discourse which are frequently seen in *Weibo* are proposed. This research provides a knowledge background for the reason why *Weibo* served as a voice of L in the incident this paper study. In "Research on media supervision in new media environment-An analysis of ten hot spots of public opinions" [3], Wan points out the important role of the opinion leaders in the media environment. "A study on the network expression of incident parties in the context of new media empowerment" points out the

^b In consideration of research ethics, the city and the name mentioned in the incident of "A Teacher's Corporal Punishment towards Her Student Resulting in Vomiting Blood" are all pseudonyms, which are called as City X and L respectively in this paper.

positive role and its historical progressiveness of the expression of citizens in the network of new media [4]. Also, it points out that when deciding which platform to use, they tend to choose the one which fits their needs of expression most. In "Pseudo public sphere from the perspective of *Weibo*" [5], it is proposed that *Weibo*, as a social media, seems to be a public network space. This publicity, however, is false, which provides a good background knowledge for understanding the seemingly rising consciousness of civil discourse in the incident this paper study.

Comparatively, non-Chinese literature has less research on illegitimate complaints in the field of Chinese education, but it has more research on complaints in the field of education in the global scope and the characteristics of Micro-blog as a medium. Among them, the ways of new media (such as *Twitter*) for political participation [6], social governance and their role in national identity construction [7], as well as the roles of opinion leaders in it are important research topics [8]. Also, the dynamic interactions of new media and traditional media have obtained widely attention [9], as well as the new models of knowledge transfer and sharing in both kinds of media [10]. It is worth mentioning that the book of Gaye Tuchman "Making News" has keenly paid attention to the phenomenon of news media that surpass judicial procedure and make qualitative or final judgments on social practice before or during trials [11], which means that "trial by public opinion" is not only a contribution to information disclosure, but also a deviation from procedural justice.

In sum, at present Chinese or non-Chinese literature has been less involved in educational illegitimate complaints in Chinese context. Therefore, this study intends to open a notch in this field.

3. Methodology

This study adopts the paradigm of interpretationism and conducts the research in qualitative research method, which emphasizes interpretive understanding of behavior and suits the needs of this study.

At 6:43 a.m. on May 30, 2020, a netizen L in City X of southern China posted in *Weibo* that her child's head teacher punished her asthmatic daughter by running 10 circles as a punishment, causing her daughter to vomit blood. In the message, she posted photos of blood-stained clothes, the hospital treatment results and the pictures of her child waiting for treatment at the hospital, claiming that the head teacher had asked her for 60,000 yuan in care fees before the incident, which was rigorously banned as a deed of educational bribe by Chinese education authorities. According to the post, after the blood vomiting, her daughter had a lasting high fever, and was left sequelae and could no longer play the violin; she also said that the teacher threatened her with an ambush to stop her complaint when she appealed it to the local education administration.

In just two minutes, the post gained wide attention and became the top trending news. On the *Weibo* platform, the post gained sustained attention through *Weibo* activities such as forwarding lottery. The teacher was inundated with criticism from the Internet. At 12:57 on the same day, the local education bureau announced the formation of a special investigation team and the involvement of the police department.

After verification, the official findings are as follows: First, the fact of teacher's corporal punishment is basically true. According to the investigation by the local education bureau, on December 10, 2019, the teacher let the daughter of L run 10 laps around the playground for the reason of violating class rules. Video surveillance showed that her daughter completed nine laps by both running and walking. After nine laps, her daughter showed no obviously physical or mental abnormalities.

Secondly, there are many false information in L's, *Weibo* message. According to the police, the blood in L's post was faked, made of cosmetics and water. The threats L mentioned and the fact that the teacher had received 60,000 yuan in the name of protection fee were lies fabricated by L in

order to increase the influence of the incident. At the same time, the child's asthma history and the vomiting of blood were not mentioned to the doctor when she went to hospital. At present, L's daughter is in good spirits. Meanwhile, the police said they found evidence during their investigation that L allegedly hired people to carry out Internet hype.

On June 1, the police announced that L had deliberately created illegitimate information on her *Weibo*, spread it maliciously using her identity and other parents and hired someone to stir it up online in order to force the school to fire the teacher and demand compensation. Considering that L's behavior seriously disturbed public order and had a bad social impact, and was suspected of provoking trouble, the police have registered a case for investigation, and have taken compulsory criminal detention against L according to law.

This case was chosen for study because it shows three characteristics.

Firstly, this is an information-intensive case. Although this case studies the "illegitimate complaints" in the field of education, its focus is not on the criticism of the one involved, because when she initially expressed her appeal request, she used the proper and legal way, but failed to get the due feedback. So this case is not a typical case of illegitimate accusations. However, when she posted the message on *Weibo*, she stated a large number of illegitimate complaints details, showing a strong "illegitimate accusation" characteristics. These paradoxical facts have their own profound social reasons, which deserve further exploration and research. Therefore, this paper adopts the perspective of interpretationism, and tries to restore the essence of the event and perceive the essence through the appearance. This approach is also the innovative perspective of this research.

Secondly, reliable evidences can be obtained in this case, which provides strong support for this study. Compared with other similar cases widely complained on the Internet, the police intervened in this case after its widespread attention. In this way the official investigation and the overview of the results can be obtained, which provides relatively rich and credible research materials for this study.

Thirdly, this case of illegitimate complaining has brought many social influences.

In terms of the development of education system, it has brought many bad influences. In the first place, the incident further undermines the credibility of the education sector. Although "A Teacher's Corporal Punishment towards Her Student Resulting in Vomiting Blood" proved untrue, the education situation was positioned in a more demanding public opinion and teachers' reputation was more stigmatized [12], which increases the contradiction between the education system and the people it serves. The public credibility of the profession of teachers continues to decline as well as the decline of the public trust in the whole social system. Also the incident also dampens the enthusiasm of teachers on the front line. Compared with many other professions, the teaching profession does not require accurate quantification of work. It has a certain degree of flexibility and requires adaptability according to the education context. It requires not only artistry, but also responsibility and patience. L's illegitimate complaints may lead to a consideration that it is better to let go than labor too much. In order to avoid professional risks, teachers may avoid any punishment that can bring troubles and misunderstandings to themselves, and even give up the appropriate punishment within the scope of their duties. Therefore, the incident has in effect injected a passive factor into the profession of teachers. In addition, the illegitimate complaints also brought serious troubles to the parties involved in the incident. Before the outcome of the police investigation, the teacher in this event received a flood of criticism and abuse that disrupted the peace of her life. After the investigation, L's children may also be in the unfavorable wind in the class and campus public opinion, and suffer secondary harm.

In terms of the use of social resources, this event has formed a waste of social resources. The reversal of the results after the investigation has consumed the confidence of netizens in this event and the credit capitals of *Weibo* and the Internet information platform. At the same time, it has

crowded out the Internet, put more important social issues and urgent issues on the back burner, and has reduced efficiency in related fields [1].

From the perspective of civil society, the appeal does not resort to social system, but to complaints, which is easy to bring up the wind of whistleblowing. This case, by taking personal matters to an online platform, hoped to settle one's problem through exposure, rather than by appealing to organizations that directly oversee this field. In fact, this may have a bad copycat effect on subsequent individual rights complaints, i.e. online complaining is more effective. In the long run, this is not conducive to the continued improvement of the decentralization system and the construction of civil society. At the same time, it will increase the wind of whistleblowing and slow down the process of civic society and democracy and the rule of law.

From the point of view of social moral atmosphere, it will destroy the trusting relationship between people and make the society fall into a situation of not daring to act freely, increase the maintenance of credit cost of the society, restrict the creativity and vitality of talents, and make the whole society fall into a passive situation. At the same time, it also opens the door to groundless gossip without evidence, and leads *Weibo* to a scene of rumors and a site of mutual harm society.

Based on the three characteristics of high information intensity, abundant and reliable investigation materials and great social impacts, this case has been chosen for research. Considering that it has the paradoxical fusion of an atypical but a strong color of "illegitimate accusation" in this case, as well as deep social reasons for the event, this paper adopts the position of interpretationism to conduct qualitative research.

Then, in the era of real-time updates of information in *Weibo*, how can L's posts be widely concerned by the whole society? Why did L choose to publish his remarks in this form, knowing that they were not true? Is there anything worth pondering and understandable?

4. The Vulnerability of Public Trust in Education System

The first reason why L chose to appeal in *Weibo* is rooted in the deep anxiety of the public about the education system and the fragile trust towards the social institutions.

On the one hand, L's appeal in *Weibo* is her choice after she failed through the former legal and normal appeal channels. According to L's statement, before resorting to *Weibo*, she had asked the local education bureau for help to deal with the fact that the head teacher had punished her daughter physically. However, after the appeal, there was no actual response towards this case.

Therefore, in order to attract more attention, L chose to appeal in *Weibo* and mixed other illegitimate information into the corporal punishment. That is to say, this choice is a rational consideration in a sociological sense within her relatively limited cognition framework. She measured the advantages and disadvantages of this posting on the basis of her own understanding. In her cognitive system, L believed that the advantages of this choice outweighed the disadvantages, so she made this choice in order to realize the maximization of pursuing her own interests [1]. For L, she might not be fully aware of the legal liability for illegitimate statements on *Weibo* but this choice was tempting enough for her because social attention will come more quickly. Therefore, after weighing the advantages and disadvantages, she added exaggerated information inconsistent with the facts in order to promote the realization of rights appealing. Considering that her posting and spreading of illegitimate information had its initial aim of right protection, when dealing with this incident, the police described L as "picking quarrels and provoking troubles" rather than "illegitimate accusation", which was based on the fact of her weak position in the first attempt to defend her right to the local education bureau.

From the perspective of personal behavior, L's vicious complaints have the intention of subjectively releasing illegitimate information, but the appeal behind her action deserves more attention. The subtext behind L's Posting on *Weibo* is actually her desire to gain a voice to be heard,

and to obtain a smooth channel of expression in the communication system between family and school, so as to tell her personal experiences in the field of education.

On the other hand, the social reaction caused by this *Weibo* posting also deserves consideration and attention. In just two minutes, this topic of corporal punishment of a teacher has been widely discussed and forwarded, which illustrates the collapse of credibility of teachers' images and the "pan-stigmatization" of their reputations [12]. This news, along with the public opinions towards the image of teachers, formed a heating theme and focus, that is, the challenge and criticism of the absolute power of discourse in the field of education. This reflects the sociality of emotional trends on *Weibo*, namely the discourse demands of "hatred of officials, hatred of the rich, seeking justice and sympathy for the weak" [2]. The high level of public attention to this *Weibo* posting has expressed concerns over the misconduct of teachers and the whole education system, as well as the demands for improved supervision of the education industry. Thus, the strategy of "displaying weakness" of L, in which L described the miserable situations after the corporal punishment, has been used to play a further role in arousing online empathy, and has achieved the purpose of rights appeal.

From the complaints of L and the responses of the public to the incident, we can see that the credibility of China's education system is insufficient. The improper corporal punishment of the teacher aroused great attention of the whole society, which shows the stigmatization of education practitioners and the whole society's demand for supervision of the education system employees.

5. The Obstruction of Communication Channels in Citizen Complaints

The channels of Chinese citizens to complain about their rights need to be more smooth and to be two-way and mutual, so as to promote the in-depth development of China's civil society.

The reason why L chose to appeal through exposure in the network is that the citizen appealing system is not thorough and cannot provide a smooth path to complain.

From a farsighted perspective, L appealed rights online by Posting on *Weibo*, which actually has shown people's sense of self-expression efficacy in the new media era [13]. This action itself is part of the expression of civil rights. Compared with the era of traditional media, in which the mainstream media have monopoly right of discourse, the era of new media takes a new look. L made voice of rights protection with the help of *Weibo*, in order to attract social attention to events related to her own interests, which has its progressive significance.

L chose to post on *Weibo*, a social network platform, to appeal because of the objective reality that rights protection through the network exposure is faster and more highly valued than other forms of appealing. It is obvious that in the past there have been successful cases that people used the way of exposing themselves or others to fight for their rights and then they got the priority. In other words, taking a private matter to a public online platform can often be more effective than the formal approaches. So L imitated and followed these cases. [1] This reality has its profound reasons of both the Chinese culture and the imperfect legal system.

On the one hand, the concept of decentralization is insufficient in Chinese traditional culture. People tend to go to the gate of their local government office, which is called "*Yamen*" in Chinese, to beat a drum for the complaint of injustice. This means that people are willing to tell the world about their personal affairs in order to be taken seriously and noticed. People tend to appeal to a holder of higher power rather than a more precise authority which is in charge of the relevant affairs. This is actually a distrust of the grievance system, and it also leads to adulation and worship of power: As long as there are more people watching, the more likely it is to attract the attention of those in higher power, the faster things will be resolved. In modern China, with the improvement of the rule of law system, this situation has been substantially improved, but in the subconscious of

Chinese people, the decentralization consciousness is still in deficiency, and the concept of flattering power is still deeply rooted.

On the other hand, the accomplishment of Chinese citizens' complaints needs to be improved. Due to the imperfection of the civil society system, the most effective form L could think of when complaining about civil rights was not legal procedure, but the exposure of public network platform, and the approach she adopted was illegitimate complaints, which was definitely the wrong use for the right to complaints.

Specifically, in this case, when L's child received corporal punishment, in addition to the relevant education department, what apps or platforms could L resort to, and what phones could L call? What channels could L use to get information about rights complaints? What was the boundary between the individual citizen's right to grievance and illegitimate accusation? What were the coping scopes of complaints for different organizations? On the Internet, should initiators and disseminators of illegitimate complaints bear separate legal responsibilities? How much responsibilities should they each bear, and how should the responsibilities be divided? When the complaining of an item was in progress, how could L examine which step the process was now going on? If the appeal was rejected or transferred to other departments, what should L do next? If L disagreed with the results of the feedback, how should L give back her own opinions?

Such information needs to be released at school, as well as being publicized in the community and parent committees to ensure that every guardian of the educated is aware of it and that the educational practitioners are supervised fully. In this case, L's initial appeal for rights protection was directly reported to the school where L's daughter was studying, and the first complaint was left unsettled. Besides, there was no independent supervisor or organization to guarantee the solution of the complaint and L was also not given the opportunities to feedback her own opinions. These were the reasons for L's second appeal.

Meanwhile, L misused the right of free speech on the Internet. Her illegitimate information in the complaint constituted an infringement on the personal dignity and reputation of the teacher involved. In this case, L enjoyed the right of freedom of speech but abused it by fabricating a lot of illegitimate information and failed to speak within the legal and reasonable range. Also, she enjoyed the citizen's right to complaints but did not comply with the corresponding obligations and failed to provide real proof materials. Therefore, in this case, L's rights and obligations are asymmetric. As a silhouette, this case actually illustrates the fact that compared with the sound appeal system and severe punishment measures for illegitimate accusations in the West, China's relevant fields are still not institutionalized and there is still a long way to go [1].

The fact that the appeal released by L on *Weibo* spread quickly and widely throughout the Internet, not only shows the insufficiency of Internet citizenship accomplishment of Chinese netizens, but also shows the potential space of improvement for online complaint system.

6. The Limitation of Citizen Complaints on Platforms *Weibo*

Social media plays a very important role in the promotion of social justice because effective supervision by the public can facilitate the realization of social justice. Therefore, social media like *Weibo* should assume the responsibility of supervision by public opinions and exercise their public power. In this sense, the posting of L on *Weibo* is a part of expression of opinions from the public.

Then why did L chose *Weibo*, a social platform, to make her voice heard? In a sense, L used *Weibo* to express herself because the communication characteristics of *Weibo* conformed to her expectation for information dissemination. Elihu Katz points out in the theory of "Use and gratification" that the information senders decide which media to choose for information dissemination based on their own needs for media. L's active choice of *Weibo* for expression is based on some characteristics of *Weibo* itself.

First of all, *Weibo* is a platform with good interaction between publicity and privacy. On the one hand, *Weibo* has positioned its brand as a social software. In order to adapt to the social needs of different people, it has various types of social circles which meets the demands of personalized friends making. After a *Weibo* message is issued, the people who follow the micro-blogger will catch this person's latest state in the first time. Therefore, in the initial stage of *Weibo* posting, the messages tend to spread among people with high sense of value identities and homogeneous opinions, which may lead to the spread of extreme views.

At the same time, the attribute of publicity of *Weibo* is also very obvious. In contrast to Wechat, another major social software in China, which serves as a social communication tool for acquaintances, *Weibo* can comment on and repost strangers' messages and spread them without adding the micro-bloggers as their friends. Based on this advantage, *Weibo* has a broad sense of public space. The popularity of *Weibo* is especially manifested in its powerful forwarding mechanism. This can be understood more easily when *Weibo* is compared with its foreign counterpart, *Twitter*. The positioning of *Twitter* is "information dissemination", which emphasizes the source of news and the responsibility of speakers for their speech. In contrast, *Weibo* focuses more on sociability, that is, the ability of reposting and spreading. For example, when forwarding a *Weibo* message, the name of the reposter appears before the author of the original posting. *Weibo* also has a counter for the number of reposting behaviour itself in the reposters message, while in *Twitter* the counter can only be seen when the original posting is unfolded. In the original intention of software setting, *Weibo* shows a strong consideration of public nature and high attention. Therefore, a posting of *Weibo* with highly topical content can easily get a huge amount of forwarding in a short period of time, which objectively meets the demands of L to hype the event.

The highly commercialized operation of *Weibo* also makes it easier to fall into the trap of entertainment and falsity. *Weibo* has invited a large number of celebrities and VIP users, most of whom are entertainment stars and they play the role of "opinion leaders", and their huge number of fans means they have great influence. The *Weibo* messages forwarded by opinion leaders will get phenomenal attention in a short time. Also, the atmosphere of entertainment in *Weibo* affects the effective expression of serious public issues. At the same time, the numerous non-benign marketing forms and commercial operations on *Weibo* also provide a huge space for artificial operation in the dissemination of *Weibo* news. For example, the hot topics searched on *Weibo* and the number of microbloggers' fans can be obtained by purchasing implicitly. The possibility of manipulating *Weibo* in a mold of commercial operation is one of the important reasons why L uses the lottery form of *Weibo*.

Due to the combination of individual and public nature in *Weibo*, its powerful forward mechanism and highly commercialized operation, *Weibo* has an absolute advantage in communication among Chinese users. Also, considering the aphasia or weak position of other information dissemination platforms in China, *Weibo*, as an influential communication medium, has helped the voice of L heard.

In other words, the public domain characteristics of *Weibo*, to some extent, has an adverse effect. According to Habermas' theory of "Public Sphere", the public sphere should have the following four characteristics: publicity, independence from political power, the ability of rational criticism and a focus on universal values. As a public platform, *Weibo*'s social function based on personalized circles makes it easy to fall into extreme values. At the same time, the entry of celebrities and stars, as well as the injection of commercial capital, increases the entertainment and topicality of *Weibo* posting, which erodes the rational character of public space in *Weibo*. What's more, it should not be ignored that the self-censorship mechanism set up by *Weibo* in pursuit of its own development, as well as the supervision of the state authority on speech, limits the diversity of expression to some extent. Therefore, the "public domain" of *Weibo* has a kind of pseudo-publicity [5]. After the police

announced their intervention, L's *Weibo* account was cancelled and all her previous postings on *Weibo* could not be viewed. In order to track the follow-up of the incident, what can be searched were only other left channels of information on the Internet, which was a microcosm of this "false publicity".

All in all, commercialization and the extreme in *Weibo* are weakening its rational dialogue environment, which limits the development of rational and critical thinking of *Weibo* users. Also, it makes *Weibo* burden less responsibilities in offering advice and suggestions upon serious topics and shapes the understanding of the appealing on *Weibo*: The more exaggerated the description, the more followers, the more likely to achieve the purpose of appeal. Such cognition of network communication, accompanied by the carnival of entertainment, stimulates L's nerves and makes her go further in the spread of illegitimate information under the influence of irrationality.

In fact, since 2009, when *Weibo* first came into the public vision, it had made outstanding achievements as an important tool for civil society and rights protection for quite a long time. When the official complaint system did not perform effectively, *Weibo* had become a channel of voice. Nowadays, due to the censorship and commercialism on *Weibo*, the role of *Weibo* as a channel of public voice is now declining.

After failing to appeal to the authorities of the education administrative department, L turned to *Weibo* to protect her rights and chose to expose her personal information to the public. This was due to the insufficiency of bidirectional and unimpeded appealing paths and the limitation of non-governmental civil protection paths. This should be an important aspect in building civil society in the future.

7. Recommendations

Based on the elaboration mentioned above, the strategies of the following two aspects might be considered to reduce the occurrence of similar cases.

On the one hand, the public power of education should be standardized and a multi-level complaint system should be established to promote the construction of a more thorough society of citizenship.

First, when the rights of the parties in the field of education are violated, there should be a multi-level complaint system for recourse, so that when the complaints to the education administration fail, other ways can be involved in. This multi-level complaint system is like a safety valve and can provide an outlet for complaints, thus to avoid the occurrence of public opinion events and increase social stability. To be specific, in addition to the official complaint platform, NGOs should be more supported and assisted to participate in home-school collaborative governance. When it comes to the construction of public opinion platforms, the monopoly position of *Weibo* should be weakened and more discourse platforms should be allowed to make their voices heard.

Second, information about complaints should be highly available in specific complaint actions. Both official complaint channels and non-governmental complaint organizations should have clear service ranges and transparent processes, so that the parties of the incidents can have access to the complaint details, i.e. they will know whether the complaints have gone to the relevant institutions or in which step the case is now. Also, a feedback mechanism is needed to give the parties a chance to speak [14].

On the other hand, the Internet complaining system should be improved and the punishment for illegitimate accusations and defamation should be normalized to optimize the Internet legal ecosystem.

From the aspect of legal system, relevant laws and regulations shall be publicized more so that the ones who make complaints know the scopes of different channels respectively and how to cope

with them. In this way, complaints can be institutionalized and the exposure of personal information on the Internet can be reduced. At the same time, the complainants should be aware of the symmetry of rights and obligations so that the complainants can give clear evidences of the case with a serious attitude.

Thus, the punishment of illegitimate accusations on the Internet should be aggravated, and the accused should be given full rights protection and smooth clarification path. Specifically, the specific forms of illegitimate accusation should be refined. Also, its legal liability and punishment consequences should be clarified and the facts of illegitimate accusation should be written in individual credit records. The above contents shall be widely publicized in the form of specific cases to inform the public. At the same time, the rights of those falsely accused should be fully protected and channels of clarification should be opened adequately so as to maximize the protection of their civil rights from being affected by illegitimate accusations.

From the perspective of the Internet platforms, the reversal of the incident of corporal punishment shows that there are loopholes in information management on the Internet: Information publishers are not reminded to the maximum extent to ensure the authenticity and seriousness of the information they publish, as well as the legal consequences they will bear if they publish illegitimate information.

Therefore, firstly, when releasing information, relevant network platforms should guide values in a conspicuous way on relevant pages, so that information publishers clearly know that they have extremely important responsibilities for the information. At present, when Internet clients use these platforms, these important legal instructions come in thick chunks of text with no aid of vivid instructions and are often ignored by users. Internet operators should use creative ways to make users clearly aware of their rights and obligations when they speak on the Internet.

Specific to the *Weibo* platform, entertaining hype and marketing accounts should be limited to restrict the discourse expansion of opinion leader in the area of entertainment. At the same time, the censorship of speech should be loosened to cultivate a larger extent of the diversity of expression and freedom of speech.

8. Conclusion and Discussion

In a word, in the incident of "The corporal punishment of a teacher" in *Weibo*, although the initiator published illegitimate news, there was a deeper demand for complaints behind it. This action was taken out of a deep sense of anxiety and distrust towards China's education system, and was also based on the reality that the channels for Chinese citizens to complain were not smooth enough and the process of civil society was still inadequate. Thus, the public power of education should be standardized and a multi-level complaint system should be established to promote the construction of a more thorough society of citizenship. Also, the Internet complaining system should be improved and the punishment for illegitimate accusations and defamation should be normalized to optimize the Internet legal ecosystem.

Illegitimate complaints in the field of education is a complex social phenomenon, which contains different types. The case studied in this paper is just one kind of the various cases. That is, when the normal complaint channels are not smooth, and other unreasonable complaint paths are chosen in order to achieve the purpose of safeguarding their own rights. Therefore, not all illegitimate complaints have the characteristics of rights protection, and there will be vicious complaints purely for the purpose of defamation. For example, China has recently implemented its "Double Decrease" policy, which bans all forms of after-school tutoring and remedial lessons. In order to improve the academic performance, some students or their parents attend underground remedial classes, which is banned by the authorities. Then they complain the remedial teachers to the local education department after all the courses are completed. In these cases, illegitimate complaints are not

because of blocked complaint channels but because of the deliberate maliciousness. These cases need to be distinguished from the situation involved in this study.

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