

Survey on the awareness and behavior of urban youth in rights protection

Robert Nelson^{1, a}, Zoe Wilson^{1, b, *},

¹The University of Sheffield, Western Bank, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S10 2TN, UK
a.robert_prof2021@yahoo.com, b.wilson1117d@icloud.com

***Corresponding Author**

Abstract: With the continuous development of the economy and the comprehensive progress of society, the legitimate rights and interests of urban youth in China, such as the right to survival, development, participation, and protection, have been realized to a greater extent. The awareness and ability of youth to protect their rights have been continuously enhanced. However, there are still issues and situations where the awareness and behavior of rights protection are inconsistent, and the education on the rule of law is not ideal. A variety of measures should be taken to further strengthen and improve the awareness and ability of youth to protect their rights, and to enhance their sense of social responsibility. This is not only conducive to the healthy growth and comprehensive development of youth but also aligns with the goals of building a country governed by the rule of law.

Keywords: Youth, Rights Protection, Rule of Law

1. Introduction

Since the reform and opening up, with the continuous deepening of economic marketization and globalization, the material life of young people has become increasingly affluent, and their desire to consume has been growing. The rise of the internet and other new media has facilitated the work, study, and life of young people, while also increasing the sources from which they receive social trends and broadening the channels for their social participation. The acceleration of urbanization, with a large influx of mobile youth populations, has led to new changes in the structure of the youth group. The increasing openness of public social spaces has made the external macro-environment in which young people grow more complex. The growth and development of contemporary youth face more uncertainties, and some young people, due to their immature mentality, are often prone to illegal infringement or even embark on the path of crime without realizing it. Therefore, it is very necessary to study and discuss the awareness and behavior of young people in legal rights protection.

This paper takes 9569 urban youth aged 14 to 35 in 10 cities of Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Tianjin, Zhengzhou, Wuhan, Chongqing, Xi'an, Shenyang, and Harbin in the eastern, central, western, and northeastern regions of China as the research subjects. The survey on the awareness and behavior of youth rights protection in China was conducted from June to October 2014. The specific situation of the surveyed subjects is as follows: males account for 50.5%; females account for 49.5%; students account for 50.5%; employed youth account for 35.9%; and social youth account for 13.6%.

2. Survey situation and analysis

2.1. Youths generally have a strong legal rights awareness

Among the survey subjects, urban social youths who "strongly agree" and "somewhat agree" that there should be an awareness of rights protection according to law under market economy conditions account for 82.4%; employed youths account for 87.1%; students account for 83.0%, showing that most young people from different groups in the city agree that there should be a legal awareness of rights protection under market economy conditions. Among them, urban employed youths are more inclined to protect their rights according to law under market economy conditions. Among students in schools in different regions of the

city, students in the eastern, central, western, and northeastern regions who "agree and somewhat agree" that there should be an awareness of rights protection according to law under market economy conditions account for 81.8%, 86.0%, 82.6%, and 82.0% respectively. The results indicate that students in urban schools in the central, western, and northeastern regions who hold the view that there should be an awareness of rights protection according to law under market economy conditions are relatively more numerous (see Table 1).

Among urban employed youth, those in the eastern, central, western, and northeastern regions who "agree and somewhat agree" that there should be an awareness of rights protection according to law under market economy conditions account for 85.8%, 88.5%, 85.8%, and 88.9% respectively. When "not very agree" and "strongly disagree" are combined into "disagree," the percentage of employed youth in the eastern, central, western, and northeastern regions who "disagree" with the establishment of a legal rights protection awareness under market economy conditions are 2.4%, 1.9%, 2.3%, and 1.4% respectively. The data indicates that among urban employed youth in various regions, those in the northeastern region are more in favor of establishing a legal rights protection awareness under market economy conditions (see Table 2). Among urban social youth in different regions, those in the eastern, central, western, and northeastern regions who "agree and somewhat agree" that there should be an awareness of rights protection according to law under market economy conditions account for 79.9%, 80.6%, 91.3%, and 81.1% respectively; while the percentage of social youth who "disagree" with this view are 2.7%, 1.4%, 0.4%, and 2.7% respectively. The data shows that among urban social youth in various regions, those in the western region are more in favor of establishing a legal rights protection awareness under market economy conditions, with a higher proportion than social youth in other regions.

Table 1: Students' Views on "The Awareness of Rights Protection According to Law Should Be Established Under Market Economy Conditions" (%) (Chi-square Test Value $P=0.00 < 0.001$)

Eastern Region	Northeast Region	Central Region	Western Region	Eastern Region
Strongly Agree	41.9	48.3	45.6	Strongly Agree
Somewhat Agree	39.9	33.7	40.4	Somewhat Agree
Not Sure	15.7	15.8	11.7	Not Sure
Somewhat Disagree	1.2	1.3	0.8	Somewhat Disagree
Strongly Disagree	1.3	0.9	1.5	Strongly Disagree

Table 2: Employed Youth's Views on "The Awareness of Rights Protection According to Law Should Be Established Under Market Economy Conditions" (%) (Chi-square Test Value $P=0.00 < 0.001$)

Eastern Region	Northeast Region	Central Region	Western Region	Eastern Region
Strongly Agree	44.8	54.3	44.8	Strongly Agree
Somewhat Agree	41.0	34.6	43.7	Somewhat Agree
Not Sure	11.8	9.6	9.7	Not Sure
Somewhat Disagree	1.7	0.8	0.7	Somewhat Disagree
Strongly Disagree	0.7	0.6	1.2	Strongly Disagree

It is evident that, overall, urban youth agree that there should be an awareness of rights protection according to law under market economy conditions, with the employed youth group showing the highest level of agreement. This may be related to the fact that urban employed youth, who are personally involved in the construction of the social economy, are more likely to feel that their legitimate rights and interests are being infringed upon. Among urban youth from different regions, those from the central, western, and

northeastern regions are relatively more in favor of rights protection according to law under market economy conditions than those from the economically developed coastal cities in the east, reflecting their more urgent demand for the construction of the rule of law under market economy conditions.

2.2. Youth show a gap between knowing and acting in rights protection

The survey found that there is a disconnection between the rights protection awareness and actions of urban youth, with a gap between cognition and behavior. When urban students were asked whether they "always protect their rights every time their legitimate rights and interests are infringed upon," 34.2% answered "Yes"; 46.1% answered "Occasionally"; and 19.7% answered "Never". Urban social youth answered "Yes" at 21.4%; "Occasionally" at 59.2%; and "Never" at 19.4%. Urban employed youth answered "Yes" at 23.1%; "Occasionally" at 60.7%; and "Never" at 16.2%. It can be seen that the proportion of urban youth who can protect their rights every time their legitimate rights and interests are illegally infringed upon is relatively low, with an average of less than 30%, which is much lower compared to the more than 80% of urban youth who expressed that there should be an awareness of rights protection according to law under market economy conditions.

Different regions show variations in the behavior of urban students when their legitimate rights and interests are infringed upon. In the eastern region, 32.0% of students "always protect their rights"; in the central region, 31.0%; in the western region, 35.1%; and in the northeastern region, 40.1%. For those who "never protect their rights," the percentages are 20.9% in the eastern region, 20.2% in the central region, 16.8% in the western region, and 20.3% in the northeastern region. Comparatively, among students in urban areas of various regions, those from the northeastern and western regions have the highest proportion of taking rights protection actions when their legitimate rights and interests are infringed upon, while students from the eastern and central urban areas have relatively lower proportions (see Table 3). As for urban employed youth in different regions, when their legitimate rights and interests are infringed upon, 29.1% of those in the eastern region "always protect their rights"; 17.0% in the central region; 18.4% in the western region; and 22.9% in the northeastern region. For those who "never protect their rights," the percentages are 16.5% in the eastern region; 13.4% in the central region; 17.9% in the western region; and 17.3% in the northeastern region. The data shows that among urban employed youth in various regions, those in the eastern region have the highest proportion of taking rights protection actions every time their legitimate rights and interests are infringed upon, while those in the western region have the lowest proportion (see Table 4).

Table 3: Students' Views on "Whether to Protect Rights Each Time Legitimate Rights and Interests Are Infringed" (%) (Chi-square Test Value $P=0.00 < 0.001$)

Eastern Region	Northeast Region	Central Region	Western Region	Eastern Region
Yes	32.0	40.1	31.0	Yes
Occasionally	47.1	39.7	48.8	Occasionally
Never	20.9	20.3	20.2	Never

Table 4: Employed Youth's Views on "Whether to Protect Rights Each Time Legitimate Rights and Interests Are Infringed" (%) (Chi-square Test Value $P=0.00 < 0.001$)

Eastern Region	Northeast Region	Central Region	Western Region	Eastern Region
Yes	29.1	22.9	17.0	Yes
Occasionally	54.4	59.8	69.6	Occasionally
Never	16.5	17.3	13.4	Never

Overall, the proportion of urban youth taking actual rights protection actions when their legitimate rights and interests are illegally infringed upon is relatively low. Compared with students, employed youth have an even lower proportion of taking rights protection actions when their legitimate rights and interests are

infringed upon, showing more inconsistency between knowledge and action in rights protection. Among students in different regions of the city, those in the eastern region are less likely to advocate for and actually take rights protection actions; among employed youth in different regions, those in the eastern region are relatively less likely to agree with rights protection according to law, but are most likely to take actual rights protection actions.

2.3. Youth legal education remains suboptimal

The survey shows that among urban students, those who have studied the "United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child," "Law on the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency," "Law on the Protection of Minors," and "Compulsory Education Law" account for 12.6%, 54.3%, 72.4%, and 60.3% respectively; among urban employed youth, those who have studied these laws account for 10.1%, 38.4%, 54.8%, and 55.1% respectively; among urban social youth, those who have studied these laws account for 11.5%, 40.3%, 53.7%, and 53.9% respectively. Among them, the proportion of students who have studied the "Law on the Protection of Minors," which is most closely related to the rights protection of youth, is the highest, accounting for more than half, while less than half of employed youth and social youth have studied this law. As for the important "United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child" that China has ratified, only about one-tenth of the surveyed youth have studied it.

Among the surveyed urban youth, 60.9% of students "have received" rights protection and legal education; 13.6% "have not received"; and 25.3% "are not sure." Among employed youth, 53.1% "have received" rights protection and legal education; 20.3% "have not received"; and 26.7% "are not sure." Among social youth, 57.5% "have received" rights protection and legal education; 13.3% "have not received"; and 29.1% "are not sure." This reflects that the overall proportion of the surveyed subjects who have received rights protection and legal education is not too high, accounting for only about 5-6 tenths, and among all types of youth, urban students have relatively more people who have received rights protection and legal education.

Among students, those in the eastern region who "have received" rights protection and legal education account for 64.7%; in the central region, 56.1%; in the western region, 62.9%; and in the northeastern region, 58.1%. Those who "have not received" rights protection and legal education are 12.4% in the eastern region; 16.7% in the central region; 11.1% in the western region; and 15.4% in the northeastern region. The data indicates that students in the eastern region have relatively more access to rights protection and legal education, while students in the central region have relatively less.

Among employed youth, those who "have received" rights protection and legal education are 56.1% in the eastern region; 49.6% in the central region; 53.5% in the western region; and 51.3% in the northeastern region. Those who "have not received" rights protection and legal education are 15.8% in the eastern region; 22.9% in the central region; 21.3% in the western region; and 23.9% in the northeastern region. The data shows that the proportion of employed youth in the eastern region who have received rights protection and legal education is significantly higher than that of other regions, while those in the central and northeastern regions have relatively the least.

Among social youth, those who "have received" rights protection and legal education are 65.9% in the eastern region; 52.9% in the central region; 51.9% in the western region; and 56.3% in the northeastern region. Those who "have not received" rights protection and legal education are 10.1% in the eastern region; 12.5% in the central region; 29.1% in the western region; and 12.3% in the northeastern region. This reflects that the proportion of social youth who have received rights protection and legal education in the eastern, northeastern, central, and western regions decreases from high to low, with social youth in the eastern region having the most access to such education and those in the western region having the least.

It can be seen that the situation of urban youth receiving rights protection and legal education is not very ideal, with only just over half of the youth having received legal rights protection education, and the proportion of employed youth and social youth who have received such education is lower than that of students. There is still a significant gap from achieving full coverage of rights protection and legal education for youth, which requires further efforts. Among urban youth in different regions, those in the eastern region generally have more access to rights protection and legal education than other regions, which is related to

the more developed socio-economic status, cultural education, and emphasis on the construction of the rule of law in the eastern region.

3. Reflections and suggestions

China's "Law on the Protection of Minors" and other laws and regulations clearly stipulate that the main bodies responsible for the protection of the rights and interests of young people are the state, society, family, and schools. For young people who are in a complex and changing social environment, and whose psychology, physiology, and values are not yet fully mature, it is entirely correct and necessary to emphasize the leading position and role of the above-mentioned entities in the rights protection of young people. On the other hand, we should also recognize that young people are independent and proactive subjects of rights. Only by fully leveraging their initiative, enthusiasm, and proactivity in self-protection, to maintain the "unchanging" quality of young people's rights protection in response to the "ever-changing" external harmful infringements, can we transform passive protection into active protection, and single protection into comprehensive protection. Only then can we unify external youth rights protection with youth self-protection, forming a comprehensive, positive, and effective support system for youth rights protection [1]. In response to the issues and situations found in this survey, such as the strong awareness but weak actual ability of youth rights protection, and the unsatisfactory state of youth rights protection and legal education, the author believes that various measures should be taken to further improve and strengthen the awareness and ability of young people to protect their rights independently, and to enhance their sense of social responsibility. This is not only conducive to the healthy growth and comprehensive development of young people but also aligns with the long-term social interests of governing the country according to the law.

3.1. Promote youth rights and legal education in schools

The proportion of youth rights knowledge should be appropriately increased in the curriculum of schools at all levels and types. By using experiential, situational, and practical teaching methods and means, the legal knowledge education of youth rights can be effectively advanced, thereby strengthening the rights subject consciousness and rights protection ability of young students. The degree to which young students understand, comprehend, abide by, and use the law could be considered in the performance assessment standards of educational authorities and school leaders to ensure the institutionalization and sustainability of youth rights protection and legal education. At the same time, school education should be organically combined with family education, community education, and media education to further expand the channels and methods of youth rights education and propaganda. In terms of content, it is important to closely connect with the actual life, work, and study of young people, and in terms of form, it should strive to be rich and colorful, and to educate and entertain, focusing on enhancing the effectiveness of youth legal rights protection education.

3.2. Leverage media for youth rights education and opinion guidance

Public media, especially the internet, mobile terminals, and other new media, have multiple sources of information, keen capture, timely dissemination, strong diffusion power, and a wide audience. They are extensive and effective carriers for carrying out youth rights knowledge education and dissemination, and are also important forces in maintaining the legitimate rights and interests of young people. Social mainstream media in different forms should pay attention to the voices of the youth group, understand their interests and demands. At the same time, they should strengthen cooperation with the Communist Youth League organizations, schools, government law enforcement departments, etc., to provide strong public opinion support and spiritual momentum for the protection of youth rights and youth rights protection. The role of public media in guiding public opinion and educational guidance in youth rights protection should be fully utilized, to do a good job in the publicity and education of youth legal rights protection, vigorously promote the spirit of the rule of law, actively create a good social atmosphere of consciously learning, abiding by, and using the law, thereby promoting the enhancement of youth rights protection awareness and the improvement of rights protection ability.

3.3. Enhance youth legal service networks

It is essential to widely establish and improve the youth rights protection legal consultation services at all levels of the Communist Youth League, communities, and schools. The main functions of these institutions are to be responsible for the popularization and propaganda of youth rights protection legal knowledge, to cultivate and enhance their legal awareness of rights protection, and to comprehensively improve their legal literacy in rights protection; to actively provide free legal consultation services for youth rights protection, hold training classes for legal knowledge of rights protection, carry out exchanges of legal knowledge and legal Q&A, analyze typical cases of youth rights protection, actively safeguard the legal rights and interests of young people, and alleviate various contradictions; to strive to explore the characteristics and laws of effectively safeguarding the legal rights and interests of young people under new circumstances. The effective work of youth rights protection legal consultation services will enable young people to learn legal knowledge of rights protection anytime and anywhere, and continuously enhance their awareness and ability to protect their rights according to the law [2].

4. Conclusion

China has a vast territory with varying degrees of socio-economic development in different regions. Therefore, it is necessary to vigorously promote market-oriented reforms in relatively backward areas and increase cultural and educational investment in these areas to universally improve the level of legal education for youth; at the same time, each region should also establish and improve its own youth protection legal system according to the actual situation, further reform the system and mechanism of youth rights protection work, so that those who protect the rights of young people can truly have laws to follow, reduce the cost of youth rights protection through reform, and fundamentally eliminate the worries of youth rights protection.

5. References

- [1] Xu Jian. The Scientific and Practical Nature of the Independent Subject Status of Minors and the Protection Law [J]. *Juvenile Delinquency Issues*, 2005(3).
- [2] Zhao Wen. *Protection and Development: Research on Youth Rights Protection and Crime Prevention* [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Jiao Tong University Press, 2011.