

# Research on the Influencing Factors and Mechanisms of Internet Moral Formation among Post-2000s College Students

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to explore the influencing factors and mechanisms affecting the formation of internet morals among post-2000s college students. Through literature review and questionnaire surveys, this paper analyzes the impact factors from three aspects: the internet information environment, student personality, and educational mechanisms. It discusses the mechanisms of internet morals through four aspects encountered in the network interaction process: social, family, and school environments, as well as the cultivation by the network industry. The results indicate that the formation of internet morals among post-2000s college students is influenced by various factors, among which the network environment, student personality traits, and family and school education are significant. Simultaneously, cultivating students' internet morals should start from improving the network environment, guiding students in proper online interactions, and shaping good personalities. The findings of this study contribute to the enhancement of overall internet moral literacy among college students and provide a reference for educational administrative departments and universities.

**Keywords:** Post-2000s College Students; Internet Morals; Mechanisms; Information Cocoon; Social Media

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Research Background and Significance

With Mark Mc Crindle (2009) in his book "The ABC of XYZ: Understanding the Global Generations" categorized the global generations into the Baby Boom generation, Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation

Z. "Generation Z" typically refers to those born post-1995 and 2000, i.e., people born between 1995 and 2009, who represent a significant social force, accounting for about one-third of the global population and encompassing the current educational cohort across various levels and types of schools [1]. This generation, the first natives of the digital age, navigates between virtual and real worlds, lives in an era of material wealth, receives a higher level of education, and is characterized by being "independent, pragmatic, mature, and self-regulating." They uphold individualism over collectivism; however, they also face challenges such as falling into the traps of "self-involvement, loneliness, anxiety, and depression." At the same time, this generation's youth possess a clear understanding of internet morals, prefer to cultivate an online image with good moral qualities, and actively engage with social issues, advocating for environmental awareness. Yet, they often overlook real-life good deeds, and the virtualization of their social lives further intensifies their avoidance of real interpersonal interactions.

### 1.2 Research Objectives

This study aims to thoroughly investigate the factors affecting the internet morals of post-2000s college students and their mechanisms by analyzing environmental and personal factors. The goals are to establish a civilized campus network environment, shape the network moral character of students, and promote good governance in cyberspace. Specific research objectives are as follows: (1) analyze the factors influencing the formation of internet morals among post-2000s college students; (2) explore the impact of internet morals on individual online deviant behaviors, university educational work, and the construction of cyberspace; (3) propose suggestions and strategies for fostering

internet morals among post-2000s college students, providing references and guidance for universities.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Definition and Evaluation System of Internet Morals

Internet morals refer to the moral values and behavioral norms that regulate people's activities on the internet. The evaluation system for internet morals should include cognitive, emotional, and intentional aspects of internet morals. Specifically, cognitive internet morals involve adolescents' understanding of the objectively existing relationships of internet morals and the principles and norms for handling these relationships; emotional internet morals refer to adolescents' attitudinal experiences of likes and dislikes toward internet moral relationships and behaviors; and intentional internet morals refer to the psychological tendency of adolescents to engage in moral behaviors based on their acceptance of internet morals [2-3].

### 2.2 Current State of Internet Moral Evaluation among College Students

Currently, the evaluation of internet morals generally considers two aspects: internet moral behavior and internet moral attitudes. Internet moral behavior, also known as deviant internet behavior, is generally viewed as a negative deviation or violation of societal behavioral norms that does not reach the threshold of criminal behavior and is a manifestation of poor social adaptation [4]. Specifically, internet moral deviance is the organic combination of internet morals and deviant behavior, referring to abnormal behaviors that occur when an individual in an online environment loses the restraint of internet morals or their internal self-discipline [5]. Existing literature indicates that internet moral deviance can lead to value confusion, emotional detachment, degradation of social norms, and lack of responsibility [6]. The second indicator for internet moral evaluation is internet moral attitudes. Internet moral attitudes refer to internet users' acceptance of the moral norms or advocated spirits embedded in online social rules. Some researchers believe that if individuals agree

with, approve of these rules, and are willing to behave in accordance with moral norms, then the likelihood of them exhibiting deviant behaviors is reduced [2]. Wang Le and others have identified that the factors influencing internet morals include individual, social, school, and family aspects [7]. Therefore, when constructing an internet moral scale, a multidimensional evaluation index system can be established based on the aforementioned factors, and specific details can be tailored for college students at different levels and stages.

## 3. Factors Influencing Internet Morals of Post-2000s College Students

### 3.1 Internet Environment Factors

Firstly, the anonymity of the internet significantly impacts the formation of internet morals among college students. The anonymity in online interactions increases the potential for deceptive and secretive behaviors, facilitating deceitful and even criminal activities, which is a major drawback of anonymity.

Secondly, the information cocoon is a crucial factor affecting the development of internet morals among college students. An information cocoon, a byproduct of the information age, is detrimental to a comprehensive understanding of the world, hinders the ability to judge the accuracy of authoritative discourse, and disrupts orderly communication [8]. Individual cognition also faces dilemmas: firstly, information narrowing leads to cognitive imbalance; secondly, cognitive surplus causes information anxiety; thirdly, it weakens individuals' ability to think [9]. In the face of the dangers of anonymity, the information cocoon's harm to college students first affects the formation and consolidation of their correct values, impedes their holistic development, and lowers their moral standards.

### 3.2 Student Factors

Student factors include self-esteem, sense of responsibility, feelings of loneliness, and sensitivity among others. There is a negative correlation between college students' self-esteem and problematic use of mobile social networks, with those having low self-esteem tending to overuse mobile social networks, leading to problematic behaviors.

Studies also find that increased use of social media correlates with increased feelings of loneliness in real life, consistent with previous research [10].

### 3.3 Educational Factors

Family and school education are also significant factors influencing the formation and development of internet morals among college students. The family is a crucial setting for personal moral development. Some parents lack understanding of the characteristics of the digital age and fail to guide their children in proper internet usage and the cultivation of good internet morals. Additionally, some schools' internet moral education is overly simplistic, lacking in systematization and specificity, which can prevent students from developing good internet moral habits.

## 4. Research on the Mechanisms of Internet Morals among Post-2000s College Students

### 4.1 Strengthening and Perfecting the Laws and Regulations Related to Internet Morals

The internet is not a lawless zone. In response to various issues arising from the lack of internet morals, the state should improve the legal and regulatory system to guide the government in constructing a clear governance system under the principle of rule of law [11]. It is essential to legally manage and regulate issues related to internet morals. From the variable discussed in this study—*anonymity*—it is clear that the current laws and regulations concerning internet morals are incomplete, with many exploiting these loopholes to commit wrongdoing online unabashedly. Therefore, relevant departments should focus on improving the laws and regulations concerning internet morals while ensuring that these regulations are directive and enforceable. They should also undertake the widespread promotion and education of internet laws. Only by confining actions within the framework of the rule of law can the internet be maintained healthily, thus fostering a clean and upright online environment.

### 4.2 Enhancing the Moral Standards of Social Media Workers

The pace of change in the internet trend is

extremely fast, and compared to traditional media workers, today's social media workers vary widely in moral standards. This leads to an increasing number of social media editors, who lack awareness of internet laws and professional ethics, flooding into the network, sometimes filling it with biased and harmful content, affecting countless post-2000s college students. Firstly, social media workers need to understand relevant laws and regulations, avoiding being "internet law illiterate," and should use the law knowledgeably. Secondly, they must strictly adhere to legal stipulations, act prudently, and impart correct values to the public. Lastly, as public figures, social media workers should set an example by actively promoting relevant laws and regulations and demonstrating good moral character to the public.

### 4.3 Cultivating New Thinking for the Positive Development of Internet Morals

With the rapid development of internet technologies, various media have emerged in today's society. It is crucial to strengthen supervision and management of these media, and relevant authorities should actively guide them to undertake the promotion of excellent traditional culture and good social moral norms. This can be achieved through public service advertisements and social media, encouraging the general internet populace to voluntarily adhere to internet morals. For some hot-button social issues, an objective, truthful, and positive attitude should be maintained in facing and evaluating them, striving to create a high-quality and harmonious online environment.

## 5. Conclusion and Implications

### 5.1 Research Conclusions

- (1) Factors influencing the internet morals of post-2000s college students include the online environment they are exposed to, their personality traits, family education, and school education.
- (2) Cultivating internet morals among college students should involve multiple aspects such as social systems, educational mechanisms, and network industry regulations.
- (3) Explore new educational models that combine family education and school education to correctly guide students' internet

moral-attitudes and behaviors, promoting the development of healthy personalities in students.

## 5.2 Research Implications

As China builds its internet infrastructure, it should pay close attention to its social ethical issues and the research findings of foreign scholars, which could help steer the development of China's internet towards a healthier direction. It is urgent to focus on the study of social moral issues arising from the rapid development of the internet.

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