The Root Causes and Countermeasures of Campus Bullying: A Study on the Phenomenon of School Bullying Among Middle School Students in Shanghai, China

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Abstract:The study investigates campus bullying among middle school students in Shanghai, focusing on its root causes and prevention strategies. Despite global attention and legislative efforts, bullying remains prevalent, impacting students' well-being and educational experiences. Employing a multidimensional approach, the research examines individual, familial, societal, and institutional factors contributing to bullying behavior. Findings reveal a lack of awareness and recognition of bullying among students, underscoring the need for targeted education and intervention. Recommendations include strengthening moral education, enhancing communication between stakeholders, and leveraging technology for monitoring and reporting incidents. By fostering a culture of empathy and accountability, schools can create safer environments conducive to students' holistic development.

Keywords: Campus Bullying, Root Causes, Countermeasures, Middle School Students, Shanghai

1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

School bullying, also known as campus bullying, is a long-standing and serious social issue that concerns the personal happiness and future development of numerous students, attracting widespread attention. In 2019, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) released the report "Behind the Numbers: Ending School Violence and Bullying," defining school bullying as "an aggressive behavior that occurs among school-age children and violates the will of others." (https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000366483) The report particularly emphasizes that this behavior is a manifestation of the strong preying on the weak, often accompanied by actual or perceived power imbalances, and may recur over time. Based on data from the Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) and the Health Behavior in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey in 144 countries and regions worldwide, the analysis indicates that by the end of 2017, one in every three students had experienced peer bullying at school, with an estimated global average of 246 million children and adolescents experiencing school bullying annually. In China, the revised "Law on the Protection of Minors" in 2020 defines student bullying as deliberate or malicious acts of oppression, insult, or harm inflicted by one party on another through physical, verbal, or online means, resulting in personal injury, property damage, or mental harm to the victim. Similarly, the "Comprehensive Governance Plan for Strengthening the Prevention and Control of Bullying Among Primary and Secondary School Students," jointly issued by the Ministry of Education and ten other departments in 2017, provides a similar definition of campus bullying.

According to a survey conducted by the China Youth Research Center among 5,864 primary and secondary school students in 10 provinces and municipalities, 32% of students reported occasional bullying, and 6% of students reported frequent bullying by older classmates. Additionally, a study by Chen Chunjin and Zhi Tingjin (2017) (refer: "China Youth Daily," [link to the article:

https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1715176653853705560&wfr=spider&for=pc]) in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangdong, and Jiangsu provinces found that 22.5% of middle school students had experienced verbal, relational, or physical bullying multiple times in the past month. This proportion is 3.85 percentage points higher than the average level in OECD countries (18.65%).

During the teenage years, which should be the most beautiful and unforgettable period of youth, countless teenagers find themselves living in the shadow of campus bullying every year. Despite the endless stream of incidents of school bullying on the internet: an 18-year-old high school senior in Shaanxi Province jumped to her death, allegedly due to long-term verbal abuse from classmates; a 13-year-old girl in Chuzhou City, Anhui Province, fainted after being slapped 64 times by two girls in a restroom; in Fushun City, Liaoning Province, five boys assaulted another boy, beating him, kicking his head, demanding him to kneel and apologize, and slapping his ears, and so on (refer: Chen Xiaoying. "Campus Bullying, Who Will Resolve It?" [N]. Legal Daily, 2015-07-13.). However, many more cases of campus bullying go unnoticed and fail to receive sufficient attention. As an ordinary high school student, even though I live in an international metropolis like Shanghai, there are still many incidents of campus bullying hidden around me. For example, one of my high school classmates experienced both physical and verbal bullying in junior high school. During a physical education class, five or six female classmates inexplicably threw volleyballs at her and spat on her. In addition, they also posted her unflattering photos on social media without her permission, mocking her with derogatory nicknames. However, when she sought help from her parents and teachers, these bullies claimed that they did not perceive their actions as bullying, asserting that they were just joking.

In reality, campus bullying can pose significant harm to the psychological and physical health of high school students, as well as threaten the creation of a safe educational environment. In instances of campus bullying, perpetrators often inflict

physical, verbal, and relational harm upon their targets, which can result in noticeable physical injuries such as bruises and swelling, or more severe consequences like fractures. Additionally, victims of bullying may develop psychological disorders such as depression and anxiety as a result. These harms are often irreversible, and in extreme cases, bullied students may contemplate suicide (Xie, J., Wei, Y., Zhuorong, Z., 2019; Zhang, E., Chen, S., 2016). Meanwhile, prolonged engagement in bullying behaviors can lead perpetrators to develop patterns of aggressive behavior and a tendency to resolve conflicts through violence. Without intervention, they may also become involved in other antisocial violent behaviors (Zhang, E., Chen, S., 2016). Consequently, what should be a safe environment for the healthy growth of students becomes perilous in the presence of campus bullying incidents.

Today, campus bullying has sparked widespread debate. In response to the frequent occurrences of campus bullying, China has established numerous laws and regulations. For instance, Article 39 of the Law on the Protection of Minors stipulates: "Schools shall establish systems for preventing and controlling student bullying, providing education and training on the prevention and control of student bullying to faculty, students, etc. Schools shall immediately stop acts of student bullying, notify the parents or other guardians of the victim and the perpetrator, provide timely psychological counseling, education, and guidance to the victim, and offer necessary family education guidance to the parents or other guardians of the students involved."

Against the above background, this study will take middle school students in Shanghai as an example to explore the causes of school bullying incidents and possible intervention methods. Why do so many school bullying incidents still occur today when relevant legislation and administrative regulations are increasingly improving? What are the current solutions to school bullying? Do they really work? What improvements can we make to prevent bullying in schools? These are the focus of this study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In response to the research question mentioned above, the author primarily analyzes existing literature from the following three aspects. Firstly, what constitutes campus bullying? Firstly, campus bullying is not synonymous with campus violence (Ren Haitao, 2017). According to the definition provided in relevant reports by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (refer: https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/sites/violenceagainstchildren.un.org/files/documents/other_documents/unesco_school_violence_and_bullying_global_status_report.pdf), campus violence mainly includes physical violence, psychological violence, and sexual violence (see Figure 1). Among them, physical violence includes physical attacks, physical fights, corporal punishment, and destroying property; psychological violence includes verbal abuse, emotional abuse, and social violence; sexual violence mainly includes intimidation of a sexual nature, sexual harassment, unwanted touching, sexual coercion, and rape. As shown in Figure 1, compared to others, campus bullying is one form of campus violence. Here, perpetrators can be peer groups, as well as teachers and other school staff.
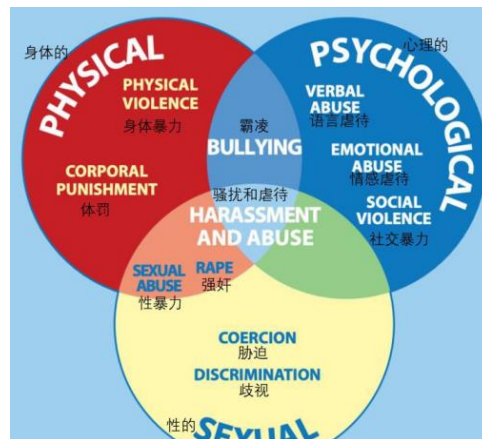

Figure. 1 UNESCO's classification of school violence and school bullying

In China, many researchers have often used "campus violence" and "campus bullying" interchangeably. This hinders the governance of campus bullying and makes it difficult to accurately determine the legal responsibilities of those involved (Ren Haitao, 2017; Yu Lingyun, Ma Zaoming, 2018). Ren Haitao (2017) emphasizes that campus violence is often sporadic, isolated incidents, which are generally easier to detect; whereas campus bullying is a long-term, recurrent violent behavior that creates long-term psychological and mental pressure. Yu Lingyun and Ma Zaoming (2018) compared the concepts of campus violence and campus bullying, emphasizing that the former primarily involves physical harm, while the latter manifests in more diverse forms. Sun Shijin and Shi Zeyi (2017) pointed out that campus bullying generally only involves low-level violent behavior.

In defining campus bullying, the definition proposed by Norwegian scholar Dan Olweus is widely accepted. In his work "Aggression in the Schools: Bullies and Whipping Boys," he defines "bullying" as "long-term repetitive harmful behavior by one or more persons directly against another person who is defenseless." Here, he believes that campus bullying has three characteristics: intentionality, repetitiveness, and imbalance of power (Liu Mowen, Fu Cong, 2023; Yu Lingyun, Ma Zaoming, 2018).

In this study, the authors mainly refer to the definitions provided by Yu Lingyun and Ma Zaoming (2018) and Xie Jiashu et al. (2019), focusing on four types of campus bullying behavior:

Physical bullying;

Verbal bullying;

Social bullying;

Cyberbullying.

Another important issue in the study of campus bullying is "what factors influence the occurrence of campus bullying." In reality, campus bullying is a complex and serious social issue, with roots involving multiple factors. The social ecological model is commonly used to analyze the multiple causes of violence (Lu Peng, Liu Fang, 2022; Zhu Yanlong, 2018). The social ecological system can be divided into micro, meso, and macro systems. The microsystem mainly revolves around individual physiological and psychological characteristics, involving bullies, victims, and bystanders; the mesosystem mainly includes families, schools, and peers; and the macrosystem mainly includes policies and regulations.

Specifically, at the micro-level, Wang Yuxiang and Dou Bengang (2021) believe that instigators and indifferent bystanders can stimulate the perpetrators' desire to perform bullying behaviors and prolong the duration of bullying. Instigators, seemingly bystanders, do not directly engage in bullying behaviors but actually support the perpetrators through their actions and attitudes. Some bystanders distance themselves from the situation, believing it does not concern them and choosing to ignore the bullying behavior. However, any bystander behavior demonstrates attention to the event, creating an invisible supportive atmosphere for the bullies and potentially prolonging the duration of bullying, exacerbating its negative effects.

At the meso-level, Wang Kangxiu (2012) suggests that parental role modeling directly influences children's growth, with parents' behaviors serving as the most direct teaching materials for children's socialization. Early education and role modeling by parents play a crucial role in shaping children's outlook on life and values. If parents have low-quality, unhealthy psychological conditions, inappropriate disciplinary methods, or a negative family atmosphere, it will significantly impact the formation of children's healthy personalities. In terms of the school level, Zhang Yi (2017) mentions that the "National Medium- and Long-Term Educational Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)" explicitly proposes to "prioritize moral education." However, despite this strategic measure, many schools still prioritize academic education over moral education, neglecting the actual effects of moral education. This education approach does not effectively promote students' development of good moral conduct, making it difficult for students to form correct moral views. Driven by exam-oriented education, moral education only exists as a supplement to schools and fails to play a role in rectifying behavior. Growing up in an environment where moral education is ineffective, students may engage in bullying behaviors.

From the peer perspective, Wang Yuxiang and Dou Bengang (2021) suggest that in many real campus bullying cases, some instigators assist the perpetrators in carrying out bullying behaviors. Sometimes, their actions are not driven by their genuine thoughts but rather by their friendship with the bullies, leading them to instigate and collude in bullying. Individuals in the early stages of adolescence highly value friendship and are willing to go to great lengths for their close friends. Simultaneously, they have a strong desire to integrate into peer groups, seeking group approval rather than rejection or isolation. Once isolated, individuals are highly likely to become the next target of bullying. Under this pressure, they choose to align their behaviors with those of their peer group. If they are friends with the bullies, they may collude in bullying and engage in instigation behaviors.

From a macro perspective, Wang Kangxiu (2012) believes that at the societal level, although China has enacted many regulations prohibiting young people from being exposed to violent culture, there are actually no specific operational restrictions. In media such as film, literature, audiovisual products, tabloids, and electronic games, adolescents can easily access violent scenes. For example, mass media often intentionally or unintentionally sensationalize extreme emotions to capture attention. News reports also frequently describe criminals' modus operandi and specific details excessively or in detail, which could negatively impact adolescents and lead to inappropriate imitation. Due to adolescents' poor self-control and discernment, they are easily influenced by such negative content, resulting in deviations in their values and behavior.

In the study of campus bullying, the third important question is "how to prevent campus bullying." To date, many methods and preventive measures for addressing campus bullying have emerged. At the societal level, Wang Kangxiu (2012) mentioned the necessity of strengthening the networked construction of moral education. It is essential to extend school education to families and society. Firstly, the networking of school education teams from principals to each grade, from homeroom teachers to subject teachers, should be realized. They should implement their respective responsibilities and cooperate with each other to contribute to the effectiveness of moral education and reduce the occurrence of campus bullying. Secondly, it is essential to realize the networked self-education of students. Students' self-education should be student-centered, with activities tailored to their daily lives and reflecting their desires. Thirdly, it is necessary to combine school education with family education. Schools should regularly communicate with students' parents, promptly understand and provide feedback on students' mental states and recent life and school situations, and jointly take responsibility for students' healthy growth. Fourthly, it is essential to combine school education with social education. Schools can collaborate extensively with social institutions to establish numerous off-campus moral education cooperation bases, thereby contributing to the improvement of moral education and the reduction of bullying incidents. At the family level, Zhang Jiazhi (2011) mentioned that schools should strive to strengthen their own construction and management, genuinely implement quality education, and effectively improve teachers' ability to handle campus violence incidents and counsel students' psychology and behavior. At the school level, Zhuowei (2017) believes that schools are the main venues for the occurrence of campus violence, and students in schools are also important subjects of campus violence. Therefore, schools should bear important responsibilities in preventing campus violence. On the one hand, schools should actively offer courses such as legal education, inviting legal counselors, judges, parents, police officers, and psychological experts to regularly give speeches and lectures to students, striving to cultivate students' legal awareness so that students understand the principles of safeguarding their legitimate rights and interests through the law and resolving conflicts through legal means. On the other hand, schools should issue detailed regulations against campus violence and equip corresponding punitive measures, such as warnings, disciplinary actions, or expulsion. Schools should also establish specialized anti-campus violence teams to address such incidents.

The above literature shows that the phenomenon of school bullying has received a certain degree of attention in our country, and relevant intervention and prevention measures are being continuously improved. However, few researchers have discussed the views and opinions of different subjects such as students, parents, and teachers on why school bullying occurs and how to prevent it from the perspective of the subjects involved in bullying incidents. In response to these issues, the author will further carry out this research.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative research methods, collecting data through questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews. In the questionnaire surveys, two different questionnaires were designed targeting Shanghai middle school students and their parents, respectively. The student questionnaire consisted of 12 questions, covering the situation of campus bullying, students' understanding of bullying, and their perceived feasible coping strategies. The parent questionnaire comprised 14 questions, including whether their

child had experienced bullying, parents' understanding of bullying, and how parents believed they should assist their children. The questionnaires were disseminated through WeChat Moments. A total of 95 responses were received for the student questionnaire, and 116 responses were received for the parent questionnaire.

Among the respondents to the student questionnaire, 49.47% were male, and 50.53% were female. Regarding grade distribution, 30.47% were in the first year of high school, 46.31% were in the second year, and 23.22% were in the third year. Among the respondents to the parent questionnaire, 44.83% were male, and 55.17% were female. In terms of their children's grade level, 20.68% were parents of elementary school students, 30.12% were parents of middle school students, 45.24% were parents of high school students, and 3.96% were parents of university students.

Furthermore, to gain insights into campus bullying from the perspectives of relevant parties involved, the author conducted interviews with teachers, students, and parents. Interviewees included psychology teachers Ms. Wu and Ms. Zhang from a certain middle school in Shanghai, two victims of campus bullying, students Peng and Xue, and six bystanders, students Chen, Wang, Zhang, Cui, Shi, and Zhai. In addition, two student parents, Mr. Chen and Ms. Wang, were interviewed. Mr. Chen is a company employee, and his child is in the second year of high school, who had previously mentioned incidents of campus bullying at school. Ms. Wang is a fashion designer, and her child is in the ninth grade. The author conducted interviews both online and offline, with each interview lasting 20 to 30 minutes.

4. THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 The overall situation of school bullying

According to the survey data from questionnaire administered to middle school students, campus bullying incidents are not uncommon in Shanghai middle schools. Specifically, 31.58% of students explicitly stated that there is campus bullying in their school, while 34.74% of students indicated that there is no campus bullying. Additionally, 33.68% of the students expressed uncertainty regarding the presence of the campus bullying (see Figure 2).
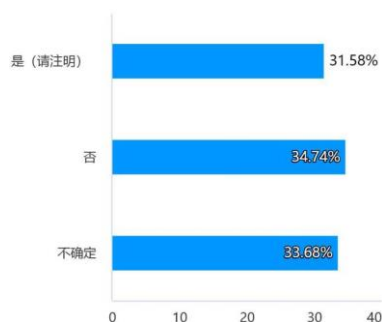

Figure. 2 The answer to the question "Do you think bullying exists in your school?" in the middle school student questionnaire

Furthermore, there remains a high risk of campus bullying. Specifically, 44.37% of students reported having been bullied themselves, while 17.89% of students admitted to having participated in bullying behavior. Additionally, 14.74% of students stated that they had witnessed instances of bullying. Only 40% of students believed that they had never experienced campus bullying at all (see Figure 3).
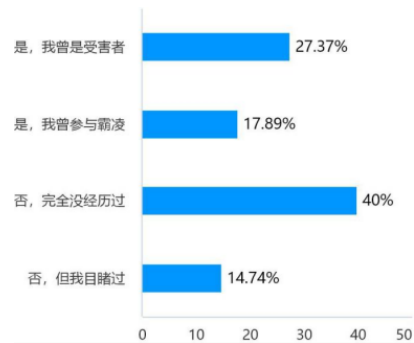

Figure. 3 The answer to the question "Have you ever experienced school bullying" in the middle school student questionnaire

Among those who have experienced bullying, verbal and social bullying are more prevalent. Specifically, 43.16% of students have encountered verbal bullying, such as cyberbullying; 42.11% have experienced social bullying, such as being isolated; and 21.05% have faced physical bullying, such as being physically assaulted (see Figure 4).
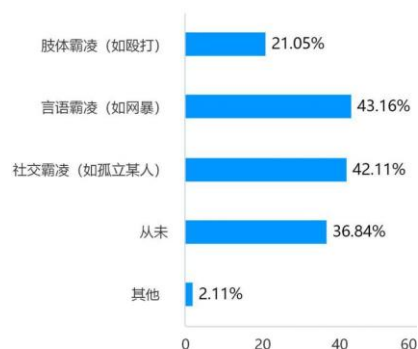

Figure. 4 The answer to the question "What type of school bullying have you experienced" in the middle school student questionnaire

4.2 The cognition and identification of school bullying

Furthermore, the survey data from the middle school student questionnaire also indicates that students lack a clear understanding of the definition of bullying. Regarding the fourth question, "Which of the following situations do you consider to be bullying?" with six options: A. Student A leads in isolating another student; B. Student B gives a strange nickname to another student, such as "four-eyes"; C. Student C threatens another student that if they don't let him copy homework, he will have someone beat them up; D. Student D often physically assaults other students because he is stronger; E. Student E secretly takes photos of a female student, posts them on the school forum, claiming she is his girlfriend, although they are not acquainted; F. Student F intentionally tears up another student's textbook, preventing them from attending class normally. 92.63% of students chose A, 70.53% chose B, 83.16% chose C, 85.26% chose D, 69.47% chose E, and 78.95% chose F (see Figure 5).

This is a multiple-choice question, and all options represent bullying behavior. However, behaviors such as verbal bullying (Student B giving a strange nickname to another student) and cyberbullying (Student E secretly taking photos of a female student and posting them on the school forum, claiming she is his girlfriend, although they are not acquainted) are not recognized as bullying by many students.
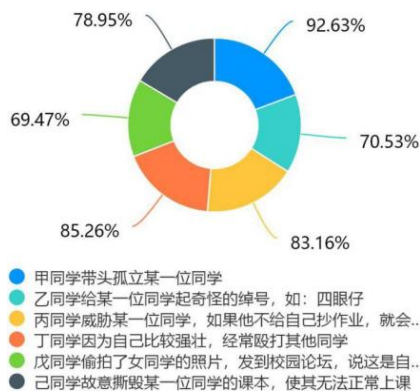
Figure. 5 The answer to the question "Which of the following situations do you think is campus bullying?" in the middle school student questionnaire

In addition, the survey data from the parent questionnaire shows that, in the same question, 87.93% of parents chose A, 52.59% chose B, 92.24% chose C, 90.52% chose D, 74.14% chose E, and 81.9% chose F (see Figure 6). This indicates that parents have a higher level of awareness and recognition of bullying compared to students. However, similar to the middle school student group, verbal bullying (Student B giving someone a strange nickname) is the least recognized behavior.
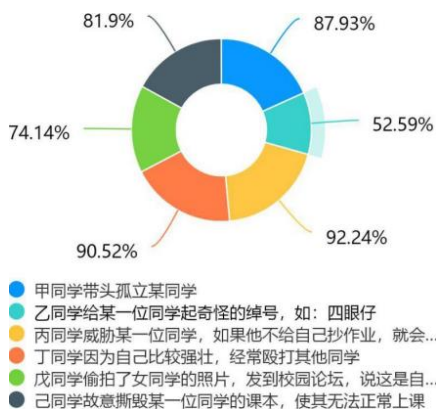

Figure. 6 The answer to the question "Which of the following situations do you think is school bullying?" in the parent questionnaire

4.3 Actions taken by students regarding campus bullying

So, what actions do middle school students take when they experience bullying? According to the survey data from the middle school student questionnaire, 60% of students choose to seek help from teachers or parents, 51.58% choose to endure and resolve it themselves, and 27.37% choose not to take any action (see Figure 7).

Figure. 7 The answer to the question "If you were bullied, what actions would you usually take?" in the middle school student questionnaire

It can be seen that for middle school students, teachers and parents are the main sources of support when encountering bullying on campus. When asked about what support or help they would seek if they were victims themselves, Zhai expressed, "Actually, reporting to school teachers is the most direct method. Because bullying occurs within the school, the teachers are the ones most capable of helping us. If I were bullied, I would tell the teacher immediately, describe what happened, and the teacher would definitely help me and punish the bully."

On the other hand, the survey data from the parent questionnaire shows that 15.52% of parents believe bullying frequently occurs on campus, 48.28% of parents believe it occurs sometimes, 27.59% of parents believe bullying is not very common, and 8.62% of parents say they have not paid attention to it (see Figure 8).
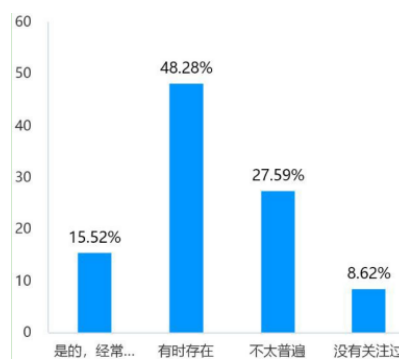

Figure. 8 The answers to the parent questionnaire question "Do you think bullying is common in schools?"

At the same time, only 12.93% of parents indicated that their children had indeed mentioned being bullied on campus, while 87.07% of parents had not heard their children mention being bullied (see Figure 9).
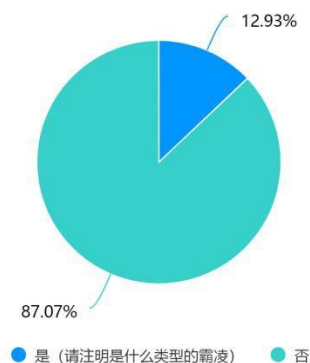

Figure. 9 The answers to the question "Has your child ever told you that he was bullied at school?" in the parent questionnaire

This may suggest that to some extent, parents have not given sufficient attention to the bullying experiences reported by their children. The interviewed psychologist, Mr. Wu, also believes, "Perhaps for students, when facing bullying and choosing to resolve it themselves, they may have sought help before, they may have sought help from their guardians at a very young age, but the response they received, even if it may have been addressed, did not lead to any significant change. So, the person seeking help may feel that this avenue of seeking help is ineffective, and if parents do not pay enough attention, then they may not trust the people close to them as much anymore."

Within peer groups, when they witness or become aware of someone being bullied on campus, 67.37% of students choose to

intervene actively and seek help; 21.05% of students choose to turn a blind eye and take no action; and 11.58% of students choose to join the bullying behavior (see Figure 10).
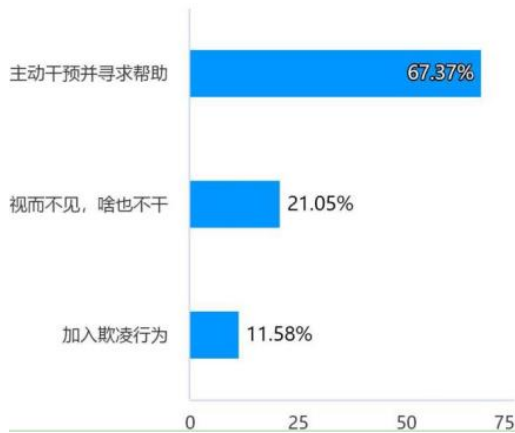

Figure. 10 The answer to the question "If you were bullied, what actions would you usually take?" in the middle school student questionnaire

This phenomenon deserves attention. Mr. Shi explained why some people may not choose to intervene actively as "bystanders." He said, "When we see someone being hit, everyone knows that our conscience tells us we should help, but why don't we? First, subconsciously in our brains, we tend to think that it's better to mind our own business, that it's not our problem, so why should I help him? Secondly, borrowing from basic psychology, the more people there are, the fewer people will help. There's a psychological theory called 'diffusion of responsibility,' which means that when there are more people, everyone thinks they have less obligation to help, leading to a reluctance to lend a hand."

Psychologist Ms. Wu analyzed the relationship between "turning a blind eye" and "joining the bullying." She said, "If bystanders just stand by and watch, it actually indirectly encourages the behavior of bullying. Today, you may just be a spectator, but perhaps one day in the future, you will become the bullied. So, I think bystanders should still actively respond, such as supporting the bullied and reporting to the teacher in a timely manner."

4.4 How to prevent school bullying?

Finally, regarding the prevention of school bullying, teachers, students, and parents hold different views. Among the student population, 48.42% believe that schools are the primary agents responsible for preventing school bullying, 28.42% believe it is the family, and 20% believe it is society (see Figure 11).
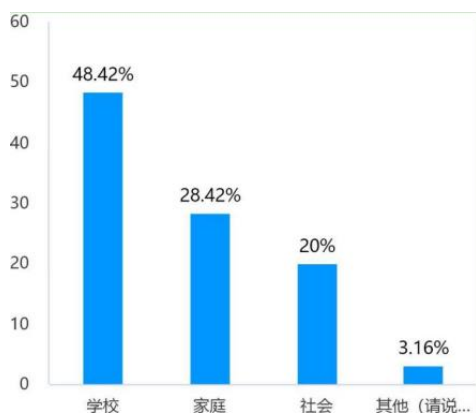

Figure. 11 The answer to the question "Who do you think is the primary subject of school bullying prevention?" in the middle school student questionnaire.

In the parent group, schools are also regarded as important entities for preventing school bullying. In response to the question "How would you respond if your child were bullied at school?" 84.48% of parents chose "Immediately contact the school," while another 14.66% encouraged their children to resolve the issue themselves. However, most parents believe that schools do not pay enough attention to the issue of school bullying. 51.72% of parents believe that schools "pay some attention, but there is room for improvement," and 14.66% of parents believe that schools "do not pay enough attention." Mrs. Wang, the parent of a ninth-grade student, believes, "Schools should provide students with a safe atmosphere where they feel they can seek help when bullied. Schools can provide protection and must educate and address bullies promptly."

Families also play an important role in preventing school bullying. Regarding the question "Could the family environment affect whether a child becomes a victim of school bullying?" 39.66% of parents strongly agree, and 40.52% of parents somewhat agree (see Figure 12). Overall, parents believe that the family has a subtle influence on preventing school bullying.
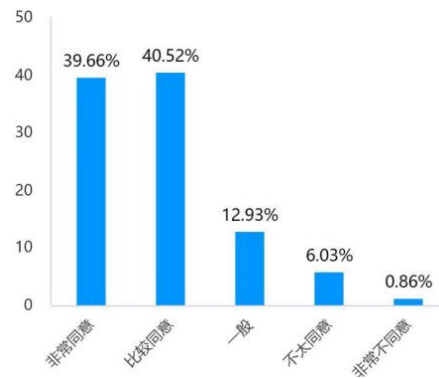

Figure. 12 Answers to the question "Is the family environment likely to affect whether a child becomes a victim of school bullying?" in the parent questionnaire

Moreover, parents also believe that "social media and the internet play an important role in school bullying." 37.07% of parents believe that social media and the internet exacerbate the problem of school bullying, while 59.48% of parents believe that they have an influence to some extent (see Figure 13).
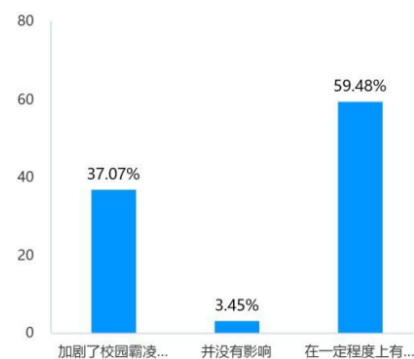

Figure. 13 Answers to the parent questionnaire question "What role do you think social media and the Internet play in school bullying?"

Regarding the question "How can parents better help their children prevent school bullying?" 31.9% of parents believe that they should pay attention to their children's social activities, 39.66% of parents believe that they should teach their children

how to deal with conflicts, and 26.72% of parents believe that they should increase their children's awareness of school bullying (see Figure 14). Mr. Chen pointed out, "If the family environment in which the child is raised is good, with fewer conflicts among family members, and the child's needs are listened to by family members, then the child's inner world should be filled with love, and they are less likely to resort to extreme measures against others. Family education and parent-child relationships are both very important. If bullying behavior occurs, the parents of the victim should provide timely support and listen to the child's grievances. If their own child is the bully, then parents should immediately identify the reasons for the behavior, point out that it is wrong, and provide positive educational guidance."

Figure. 14 Answers to the question "How do you think parents can better help their children prevent school bullying?" in the parent questionnaire

In addition, in the open-ended question "As a parent, what do you think you can do to prevent school bullying?" the responses of the parents are represented in the word cloud in Figure 15. Among them, "communication" is considered the most important prevention approach by the parent group. This includes both collaboration between home and school, as well as communication between parents and children and education within the family.

Figure. 15 Word cloud of the parent questionnaire "As a parent, what do you think you can do to prevent bullying in schools?"

5. ANALYSIS OF CAUSES OF CAMPUS BULLYING

This study primarily analyzes the causes of school bullying among middle school students in Shanghai from four dimensions within the theoretical framework of the "social-ecological model."

School Level:

As the name suggests, school bullying generally occurs within the school and its vicinity, with students typically being the victims. Therefore, factors at the school level are crucial. Under the current educational system, academic achievement is placed at the core, which is particularly evident in the daily operations of schools and students' paths to further education. Teachers often devote significant efforts to improving academic performance, while relatively neglecting the mental health of adolescent students, their social skills development, and curtailing their extracurricular activities. Especially in this era of "academic stress," the lack of a supportive and inclusive atmosphere among students exacerbates conflicts and triggers bullying behaviors.

On the other hand, despite the enactment of a series of laws and regulations requiring schools to establish relevant systems for the prevention and intervention of school bullying, from the perspectives of parents and students, schools still do not pay sufficient attention to bullying and fail to address it seriously. In interviews, a student named Cui mentioned, "It's because the school doesn't take bullying seriously that many times when we write letters to the principal to report bullying incidents among students and hope the school will establish strict rules to prevent bullying, the school never responds."

Family Level:

The family serves as the earliest socialization environment for children, and the role modeling of parents is crucial to their growth, shaping their worldview and values directly. According to the survey data of this study, over sixty percent of the interviewed students believe that inappropriate parenting styles are significant contributors to school bullying. First, parental education directly shapes the child's mindset and behavior. Ideally, family education should cultivate empathy in children and teach them how to interact positively with others. Conversely, when family education neglects these aspects or even exhibits negative patterns such as authoritarianism or control, children may mimic such behaviors in school, using bullying as a means to exert control over their environment and compensate for their own feelings of insecurity Second, the family environment and parent-child relationship also profoundly influence children's social behaviors. In a tense, unsupportive, and unloving family environment, children may resort to bullying to seek attention and a sense of power. This behavior may manifest in school as a pursuit of power or as a roundabout way to seek attention and recognition they cannot obtain at home.

Within the family, parents' attitudes and responses to bullying are also crucial factors influencing children's behavior. If parents ignore reports of bullying from their children or fail to provide effective solutions, children may perceive seeking help as futile, thus reducing trust in parents and other potential support systems. This is precisely what was reflected by the psychological counselor Ms. Wu. She pointed out that students may choose to handle problems themselves due to parental neglect of bullying issues, which may further weaken their conflict resolution skills and willingness to seek help.

Peer Group Level:

According to the survey conducted in this study, "poor peer relationships" were identified by high school students as the most significant factor leading to the occurrence of school bullying, with as many as 62.11% (refer to Figure 16). Undoubtedly, the influence of peer groups on adolescent students is crucial. In the process of adolescents' growth, the

influence of peers often rivals that of family and school, and in some contexts, peer influence may even be more significant.
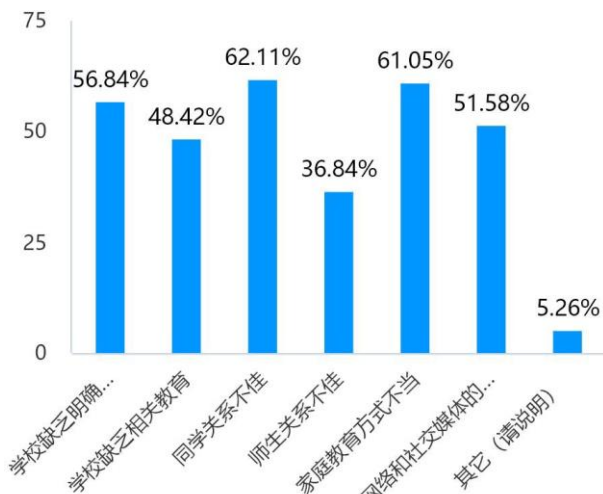

Figure. 16 The answer to the question "What do you think are the three most important reasons for school bullying?" in the middle school student questionnaire.

First of all, it needs to be pointed out that bullying behavior is, to some extent, a manifestation of the imbalance of power between peers, and this imbalance is usually rooted in the social structure within the group and the interaction between individuals. Therefore, "isolation" and "exclusion" are the most common forms of campus bullying among middle school students. Typically, bullies are the stronger ones in their peer group, and bullying is their way of asserting power or attracting attention.

At the same time, competition and jealousy among peers may also inspire bullying behavior, especially in environments where competition and personal achievement are overemphasized. For example, one of my high school classmates was hit in the face with a volleyball by five or six classmates in junior high school. They took pictures and posted them to Moments, along with insulting comments. This was simply because these five or six classmates felt that she had better academic performance and were jealous, so this school bullying case occurred.

Finally, peer pressure cannot be ignored. During adolescence, students long to be accepted by peers and gain a sense of identity and belonging. In order to seek recognition, some students may engage in bullying behaviors with the encouragement or provocation of friends. This is what psychology teacher Wu once analyzed, the very subtle relationship between the "bystanders" and the "bully".

Internet and social media level

In the Internet age, the role of online media in school bullying cannot be ignored. Often, media depictions of violence and conflict, as well as an emphasis on comparison and exclusion, can have a negative impact among students and increase the incidence of bullying in schools. Even some entertaining behaviors may attract teenagers to imitate them and bring them into real life. For example, on October 18, 2015, the "three teenagers murdered" occurred in Shaodong, Hunan.

The "Teacher Case" shocked the whole country. Three teenagers under the age of 14 infiltrated an online shooting game "Cross Fire" into reality and committed the crime of killing their teacher.

Secondly, the Internet provides a hidden and broad stage, which greatly reduces the accountability of related illegal and moral violations, and also breeds a new form of bullying called cyberbullying. Teenagers can make inappropriate remarks by "liking" and "retweeting", and the cost of bullying itself has also been reduced. For bullies or those who stand by them, long-term exposure to this type of bullying may develop inappropriate values over time.

6. SOLUTIONS AND PREVENTION OF SCHOOL BULLYING

Campus bullying is a serious social issue that not only has long-term negative impacts on the victims but also affects the bullies themselves, bystanders, and the entire school environment. Therefore, preventing campus bullying requires a comprehensive strategy covering multiple aspects such as the education system, family system, and society.

1. Education System

In the survey data of this study, middle school students and parents believe that schools should strengthen the management of campus bullying. Therefore, the education system should formulate clear anti-bullying policies. Schools need to have clear policies to define bullying behaviors and specify their consequences. These policies should not only be documented but also communicated to every student and parent through school assemblies, parent meetings, and classroom education.

Secondly, professional training should be provided to teachers and school staff to identify signs of bullying behavior, understand how to handle bullying incidents, and learn how to intervene effectively. These trainings should cover aspects such as conflict resolution, communication skills, and empathy development.

Furthermore, supportive campus environments should be created. Schools should foster an inclusive, respectful, and safe learning environment. Through team-building activities, role-playing, and group discussions, students can learn how to respect diversity, cultivate empathy, and develop positive social skills. It has been observed that schools with a strong reading culture among students have almost no campus bullying incidents. This is because reading helps cultivate students' emotional intelligence, enabling them to better understand and manage their own and others' emotions, thus reducing the likelihood of conflicts and bullying. By reading educationally meaningful books, students can encounter stories about friendship, respect, and cooperation, thereby developing positive values to counteract negative behaviors. A friend of mine once mentioned that there used to be many campus bullying incidents at his school. After the student council collectively reported this issue to the school authorities and proposed improving the campus culture, the school instructed each student to read 3 books per semester, aiming to develop the campus reading culture. In recent years, my friend noted that campus bullying incidents have reduced to single digits.

Finally, the education system should give sufficient attention to campus bullying and conduct regular bullying prevention education. Integrating anti-bullying education into the curriculum helps students understand the consequences of bullying and learn how to handle bullying situations, including discussing personal responsibility, seeking help, and becoming proactive bystanders. I believe schools can establish an "Anti-Bullying Heroes" program: designing a project that encourages students to become anti-bullying heroes in the campus, rewarding them for performing acts of kindness and supporting those who are bullied on a daily basis, thus reducing conflicts.

Similar programs in my school seem to be effective, as there have been almost no campus bullying incidents in recent years.

2. Family and Social Strategies

Family education also plays a crucial role. On the one hand, parents have a responsibility to explain to their children what bullying behavior is, including verbal, physical, and cyberbullying. They should make it clear that bullying is unacceptable and teach them how to respond to and report bullying incidents. On the other hand, families should provide a supportive environment. Parents should encourage children to share their school experiences, including their concerns and challenges. When children feel heard and understood, they are more likely to seek help when experiencing bullying.

Moreover, parents should demonstrate respect and kindness towards others through their own behavior. Children often mimic adult behavior, so demonstrating positive social interactions and healthy ways of resolving conflicts is crucial for their behavioral development.

At the societal level, raising public awareness of campus bullying through television, the internet, and social media can be effective. Public service advertisements, educational programs, and online resources can enhance society's intolerance towards bullying behavior.

3. Individual Strategies

At the individual level, efforts should focus on cultivating students' self-protection abilities, leadership skills, and sense of responsibility. On the one hand, students can be educated on self-protection and how to firmly reject bullying behavior through role-playing and self-defense courses. On the other hand, students can be encouraged to serve as anti-bullying ambassadors in schools, setting good examples for other students and assisting in implementing school anti-bullying policies.

In this process, virtual reality (VR) technology can be utilized to prevent campus bullying. Badger et al. (2023) mentioned in their study that virtual reality (VR) provides an opportunity to study bullying behavior in a safe and controlled environment while still providing participants with a strong experience of being in a bullying environment. Participants can experience strong and unique perspectives in virtual environments (VE) from a first-person perspective. It is also a method that allows standardized and controlled operations, where specific stimuli can be included or removed, while the overall environment remains unchanged. Participants may respond to the described events, which are comparable to real-life events. Creating virtual scenes allows students to experience the context of campus bullying firsthand, enhancing their emotional awareness and understanding, and promoting awareness of bullying prevention. It also enables students to simulate experiences of dealing with bullying situations, improving their ability to take positive action in real life. Using VR to simulate emotional training scenarios helps students recognize and manage their emotions, enhance emotional intelligence, and better cope with potential bullying situations. Creating virtual reality educational courses to convey knowledge and skills for bullying prevention to students, improving the attractiveness and effectiveness of learning through immersive experiences.

In conclusion, preventing campus bullying is a complex process that requires efforts from various parties and sustained commitment. The education system, families, and society must collaborate to build a supportive and positive environment. In this regard, the pHARe program in France is noteworthy (Long, Dong, 2022). The program divides the prevention of campus bullying into four modules: assessing the overall atmosphere of the campus; establishing specialized departments composed of experts and educators to intervene in campus bullying; strengthening the tripartite cooperation of "home-school-democratic committees"; and finally establishing an exclusive digital platform to combat campus bullying, tracking and evaluating the effectiveness of the above actions.

Looking forward, let us work together to create an environment of zero tolerance for campus bullying. By strengthening education and cultivating students' social skills and emotional intelligence, we can provide a safe and inclusive learning environment for every student. Encouraging cooperation among schools, families, and society forms a strong support network to help students affected by campus bullying regain confidence and dignity. Only through collective efforts can we create a more friendly and tolerant learning environment for the next generation, enabling every student to thrive.

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