

"Why Did This Happen to Me When I Did Nothing Wrong?"

| School Violence



The recent case of a 14-year-old boy from Lingbi Yugou Middle School, who died following a conflict, has reignited public concern about school violence. While the police report debunked rumors of “burn marks from cigarettes,” “a group beating,” and “perpetrators with influential relatives targeting a long-time victim,” the tragic outcome of the boy losing his life due to school violence remains unchanged.

The incident has sparked widespread outrage and sympathy online, as countless netizens voiced their anger, grief, and compassion. This public reaction reflects years of collective frustration over recurring cases of school violence. Stories like a girl being slapped repeatedly and forced to kneel in a dormitory, a boy’s head being shoved into a cesspit, or students suffering depression due to verbal abuse and ostracization by teachers have struck a chord with audiences. The vulnerability of the victims and the severe harm they endured resonate deeply, even prompting those who’ve experienced school violence themselves to share their own stories.

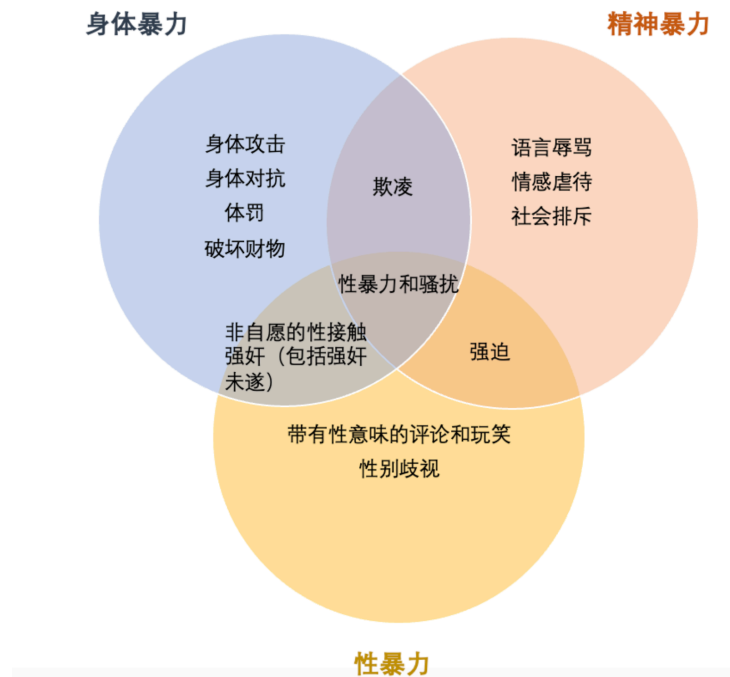
According to a UNESCO report on “School Violence and Bullying,” approximately 240 million students in 144 countries and regions face bullying annually—equating to one in three students experiencing peer abuse. A 2016 survey by the China Youth and Children Research Center, involving 5,864 students across 10 provinces and cities, found that 32.5% were occasionally bullied, and 6.1% were frequently targeted by older peers. Another study from Zhejiang University revealed that 49% of students admitted to engaging in some form of violence against others, while 87% reported being victims of varying degrees of peer violence.

These alarming statistics demonstrate that school violence is far from anecdotal—it is a pervasive issue. Everyone has navigated school life, and everyone is either at risk of experiencing violence or unknowingly perpetuating it.

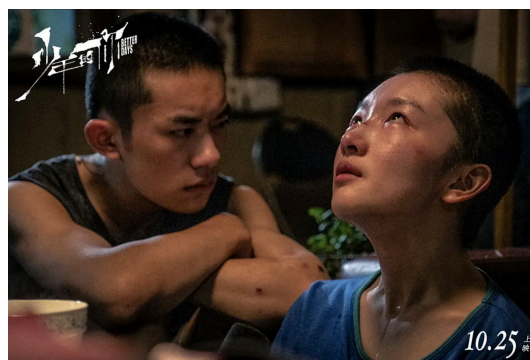
Behind the Sunshine, Blood and Tears

School life is often described as a golden age, brimming with beauty and potential. Yet, school violence casts a dark shadow, cutting short countless youthful blossoms with its cruel fists and words.

School violence refers to aggressive behavior within or outside school that harms victims physically, emotionally, sexually, or psychologically. Common forms include physical violence, emotional or psychological abuse, sexual violence, and bullying.



When thinking of school violence, most people picture group beatings—scenes frequently sensationalized online. However, the violence that lurks in the shadows often goes unnoticed, even by the victims themselves. Verbal insults, emotional abuse, and social exclusion—forms of psychological violence—are often dismissed or ignored.



The 2019 blockbuster *Better Days* starkly portrayed chilling acts of violence: slaps, beatings, forced kneeling, hair-cutting, and invasive photo-taking. Yet the most suffocating aspect was Wei Lai's orchestrated isolation and verbal humiliation of Chen Nian, creating a cold war-like atmosphere that trapped her in solitude. Even today, such psychological violence remains difficult to document or prosecute in a society governed by law. Words can cut deeper than knives, leaving wounds on the heart that are no less lethal.

Even as a graduate student in an ostensibly mature environment, I experienced exclusion and ridicule from someone wielding a small amount of authority. His justification for isolating me from the group was, *"You're neglecting me for your boyfriend. You lack loyalty, and you'll never find good friends here."* Others followed his lead, subtly ignoring me. Looking back, it was merely a test of submission—a petty exercise of his power. While I can now recount this lightly, at the time, it left me in tears for days.



With the advent of the internet, school violence—especially psychological violence—has found a wider stage. Rumors, slander, and insults spread faster and farther online, fueled by uncertain and impressionable individuals. A 2021 report by a Korean youth violence prevention agency revealed that while instances of physical school violence decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic, cases of cyberbullying tripled.

From physical harm to emotional scars, from face-to-face confrontations to anonymous attacks, school violence permeates every corner. As you scroll past these stories, the outrage in your chest may have already dulled, eroded by the endless stream of negative news. Yet for the victims—who might be any of us, past, present, or future—how can we not care? After the violence, what becomes of them?

After the Violence, What Happens to Them?

"My heart has never left the 16-year-old schoolyard. I always wonder, I did nothing wrong, so why did this happen?" wrote one netizen. She has spent over a decade trying to heal from that time but still finds herself crying alone in the dead of night. Compared to physical wounds, the emotional scars left by school violence often run far deeper. Many victims grapple with the same agonizing question:

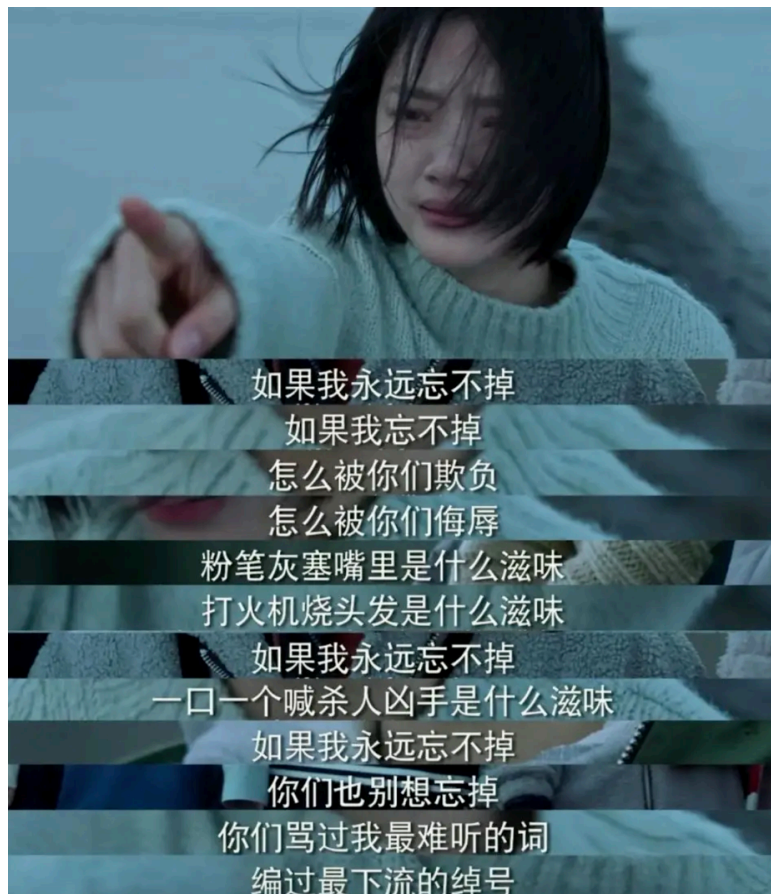
"why me?"

As Keigo Higashino wrote in *Malice*:

"It's as if one day you're suddenly branded with the mark of a demon.

That's how school violence begins."

Bullying often arises without any real reason. At its core, it might stem from something trivial.



Take the case of Wang Jingjing, featured in the talk show *Talking to Strangers*. She endured ten years of school violence: rumors, insults, and even physical abuse from seniors who didn't even know her personally. The catalyst? In 2008, two classmates accidentally broke her mug in high school. A seatmate jokingly remarked, *"Her mug's worth three million!"* That one baseless comment plunged her into a decade of torment.

Such seemingly baseless beginnings exacerbate victims' self-doubt. During the formative years of adolescence, school violence plants a seed of pain that can sprout at any time. As Cai Renwei poignantly wrote:

*"As children, we'd touch sensitive plants for fun, watching them shrink away.
But no one ever thought about how long it would take for them to reopen."*

A moment of amusement for the bully can become a lifetime of suffering for the victim. The aftermath of violence varies in severity—from death to physical injury. According to a judicial report by China's Supreme People's Court on school violence cases:

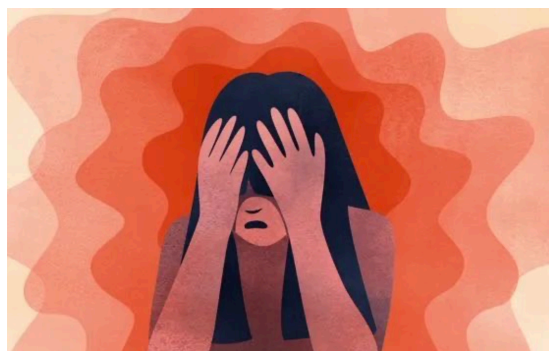
- 11.59% of cases involved the victim's death.
- 31.87% resulted in severe injuries.
- 38.54% involved minor injuries.
- 27.94% resulted in slight injuries.

The psychological damage is even more widespread, leading to fear of school, personality disorders, or depression—ghosts that haunt victims for life. Actress Ma Sichun, speaking on a variety show, recalled her experience with school violence in middle school. The helplessness and isolation lingered into adulthood, manifesting as anxiety. She shared:

"I just felt like I wasn't good enough."

otherwise, I wouldn't have ended up so weak."

"She was the start of my insecurity, making me feel like I was nothing."



The more we learn about school violence, the more shocked and angry we become—shocked that such unprovoked malice can be directed at classmates, and angry that it has ruined so many young lives. While bullies may have their own struggles, nothing justifies their actions.

What can we do? At best, we can witness fragments of the violence and respond with attention, empathy, and advocacy—creating public outcry to counter school violence. But what about the victims, especially their paralyzed emotional state after the violence? How do we rescue their minds and souls?

Intervention is Imperative

Tragically, many students choose silence over seeking help after experiencing school violence. According to a report by *Modern Education News*, nearly 50% of students surveyed in the *Research on Bullying Among Middle School Students* published by the China Women's University did not report their bullying experiences. The study found that 52.6% of these students refrained from seeking help primarily because they were “afraid of losing face and being looked down upon by peers.” During adolescence, a heightened need for self-esteem, coupled with immature cognitive development, often compels victims to endure silently rather than reach out for support.

Fear of retaliation from perpetrators is another major reason for victims' reluctance to seek help. A friend of mine recounted how her younger brother was slapped more than ten times by a classmate years ago. He lied, claiming he had bumped into something, and only admitted the truth after her persistent questioning. Even then, he begged her not to inform the teacher or confront the bully, fearing revenge. Although the matter was eventually resolved by parents and teachers, the boy was too frightened to attend school for a week, worried about being ambushed on his way there.

This highlights the crucial role of parents and teachers in understanding and monitoring students' psychological well-being. Their vigilance and involvement are key to preventing and rescuing children from the depths of school violence. Similarly, peers—who are often the first to notice unusual behavior—should actively offer support and encourage victims to seek help. For students still within the confines of school life, parents, teachers, and classmates are their lifelines. Any apathy from these parties could leave victims further ensnared in their struggles.

Actress Ma Sichun, who experienced school violence, once shared that her parents' dismissive attitude worsened her sense of helplessness. When she sought their help, they simply replied, “*Just ignore her and focus on yourself.*”

Intervention is not just important—it is essential. The CaringMinds team is committed to doing its part by offering free psychological counseling services to individuals who have experienced or are experiencing school violence. Made up of university and high school students from institutions across China and abroad, the team is passionate about promoting mental health and public welfare. Through peer-to-peer communication, they aim to foster optimism and create a supportive, protective environment for young people.

we refuse to turn a blind eye to school violence.
with our hearts, we hope to bring warmth and healing to theirs.

