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*Original Paper*

# A Survey on Campus Bullying in Vocational Colleges in Hunan Province of China

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## Abstract

In China, more than 10% campus bullying occurs in vocational colleges. This is a survey on campus bullying in Vocational Colleges in Hunan Province of China. The study shows that most of students in vocational colleges do not have a thorough understanding of mental bullying compared with physical bullying. Females are the main victims of campus bullying in vocational colleges. Daily frictions and emotional disputes are the main trigger for campus bullying. To prevent campus bullying, it is necessary to strengthen the colleges' safety management of and the punishment for bullies.

**Keywords:** Campus bullying, Physical bullying, Mental bullying, Vocational colleges

## 1. Introduction

The campus bullying in this paper refers to violence against students that occurs in vocational colleges. The perpetrators use force, their power, or other oppressive methods to invade, bully, or humiliate the victims physically or mentally.

In China, college education contains undergraduate education and higher vocational education. The former is conducted in ordinary universities, while the latter is conducted in higher vocational colleges. As of 2023, there are a total of 47.6319 million college students in 3074 higher education institutions in the country, including 17.4032 million students in 1547 higher vocational colleges (which number is increasing to 1560 by 2024). For most Chinese students, ordinary universities are their first choice for higher education. Only students with poor academic performance have to enter vocational colleges where campus bullying occurs more frequently than ordinary universities.

According to the data on China Judgments Online, from 2008 to 2023, a total of 10023 cases related to campus bullying were tried. Henan Province (1781 cases), Anhui Province (873 cases), Shandong Province (612 cases), and Hunan Province (604 cases) are places where campus bullying occurs most frequently. Due to the fact that the author's institution is located in Hunan Province, the author selects 37 vocational colleges in Hunan Province to do this research.

## 2. The Respondents' Views on Campus Bullying

The author distributed 50 survey questionnaires to each of 37 vocational colleges mentioned above. Out of all questionnaires collected, 1803 questionnaires were valid. The respondents randomly chosen are aged between 17-24, with 956 males (53%) and 847 females (47%).

Among 1803 respondents, 1731 students (96%) state they know or have heard of campus bullying, including 1316 students (73%) state that they can't distinguish the boundary between campus bullying and campus conflicts, and 415 students (23%) state that they have a clear understanding of the meaning of campus bullying.

When asked about the ways of campus bullying occurs. 1777 students (98%) chose physical attacks, such as beatings, slaps, body abuse; 1623 students (90%) chose sexual insult; 1442 students (80%) chose acts of plundering benefits, such as robbing, extorting, asking for protection fees; 1136 students

(63%) chose cold violence, such as isolate or marginalize someone; 920 students (51%) chose spreading victims' privacy; 541 students (30%) chose verbal abuse, such as cursing, slandering, ridiculing, or making up and spreading rumors. (Shown in Figure 1)

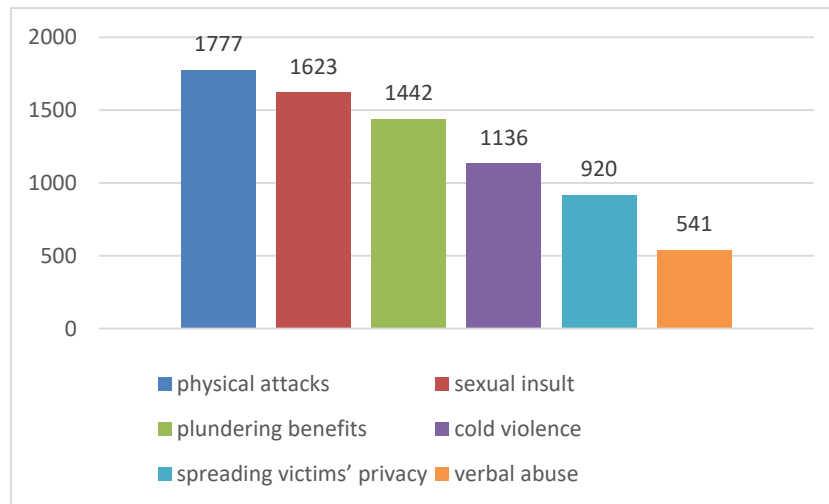


Figure 1. 1803 respondents' choice of the ways of campus bullying

Out of 1136 respondents who consider cold violence as campus bullying, 727 students (64%) believe that such behavior committed alone is not illegal. Among the 920 students who believe that spreading victims' privacy is campus bullying, 552 students (60%) believe that such behavior committed alone is not illegal. Among the 541 students who believe that verbal abuse is campus bullying, 465 students (84%) believe that such behavior committed alone is not illegal.

69% of all respondents (1244 students) state they have heard of campus bullying happened in their university, but they are not witnesses; 20% of them (360 students) state they never have heard of campus bullying around them; 11% of them (192 students) deem that campus bullying indeed occurs and they used to be victims of campus bullying.

92% all respondents (1328 students) believe that the perpetrators should be punished by the judiciary; 8% of them (115 students) believe that the perpetrators should be punished by the colleges. But when the premise is changed to "campus bullying does not cause serious harms", 54% of them (973 students) chose letting the colleges solve the problem, 33% of them (595 students) still chose the judiciary, 13% of them (234 students) chose to forgive the perpetrator after education.

According to the survey, the attitude of respondents towards campus bullying depends on whether the campus bullying has caused serious consequences. Many respondents are relatively tolerant to the perpetrators in the absence of serious consequences.

When asked who should mostly bear responsibility for campus bullying without considering the perpetrators, 920 respondents chose the colleges; 487 students chose the law; 234 students chose the families of the perpetrators; 126 students chose the society; 36 students choose someone else.

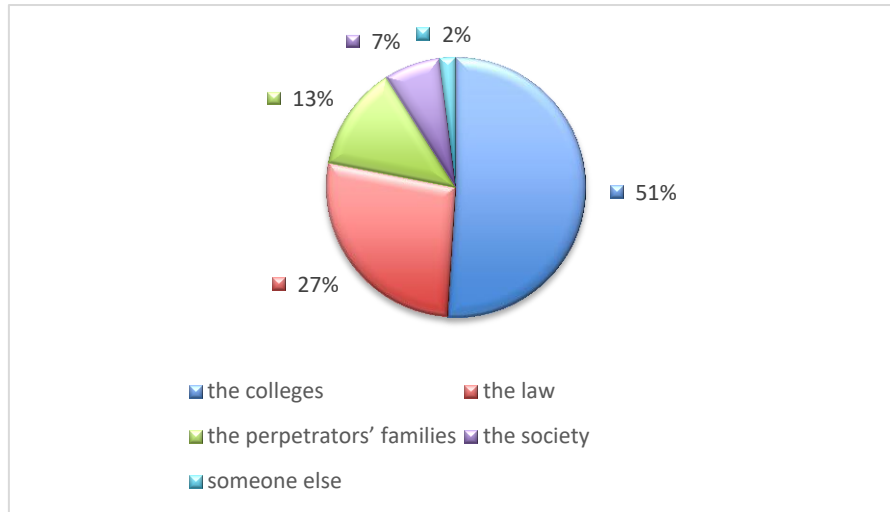


Figure 2. Who should mostly bear responsibility for campus bullying

Among the 920 respondents who chose the colleges, 285 students (31%) believe that the colleges have not provided sufficient education on bullying prevention; 248 students (27%) believe that the colleges' punishment for the perpetrators is not strict enough; 230 students (25%) believe that the safety management in colleges is very poor; 110 students (12%) believe that the college fail to provide protection to the victims in time; 46 students (5%) believe that the universities have other managerial problems.

Among the 487 individuals who chose the law, 166 students (34%) believe that the punishment for bullying by law is not quite severe; 146 students (30%) believe that the law is always leniency towards student bullies, especially for minors; 127 students (26%) believe that the law itself has flaws; 49 students (10%) believe that the law is powerless in face of mental bullying.

### 3. Basic Situation of Campus Bullying in Higher Vocational Colleges

Among 192 respondents who have experienced campus bullying, 68% of them (131 students) are females; 32% of them (61 students) are males. 138 victims (72%) pointed out that they were bullied by students with the same gender. Out of 54 victims who experienced opposite gender bullying, 51 victims were females. (Shown in Figure 3)

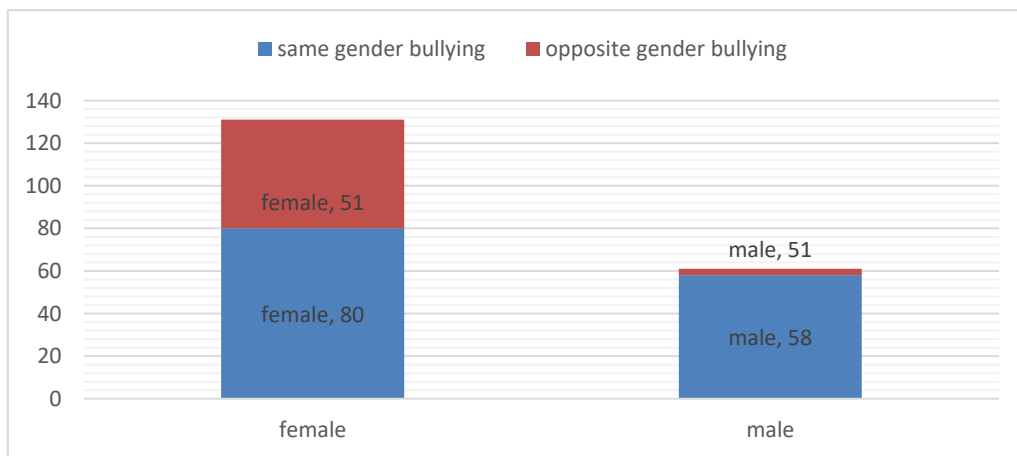


Figure 3. Gender of 192 victims

Among the 192 victims, 109 victims (57%) were beaten or body abused; 69 victims (36%) were subjected to verbal abuse; 37 victims (19%) were robbed and extorted; 32 victims (17%) were sexually insulted; 27 victims (14%) were isolated or marginalized; 21 victims' (11%) privacy were spread. (Shown in Figure 4)

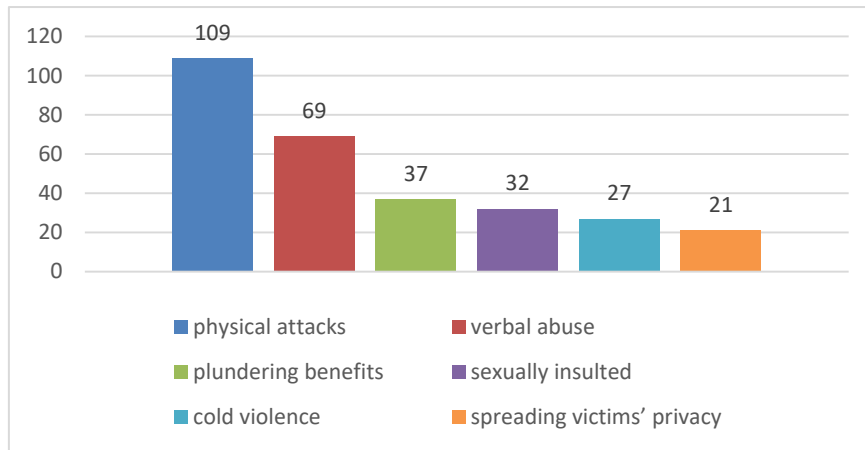


Figure 4. 192 victims' choice of the ways of campus bullying

Totally, 178 victims (93%) reported they experienced physical bullying, 117 victims (61%) reported they experienced mental bullying. 54% of victims (103 students) stated that physical bullying and mental bullying occurred together. Only 7% of the victims (14 students) reported they just suffered mental bullying.

73% of the victims (140 students) chose to expose the perpetrators when they were bullied for the first time, among them, 46 victims chose to seek help from their college or teachers; 38 victims sought help from the police; 30 victims sought help from their families; 25 victims sought help from friends. (Shown in Figure 5) Even though, 22 victims (16%) were bullied again afterwards, including 11 victims who had sought help from colleges; 7 victims who had sought help from friends; 4 victims who had sought help from their families. Out of the 52 victims who chose to keep silence after being bullied, 39 students (75%) were bullied again shortly afterwards.

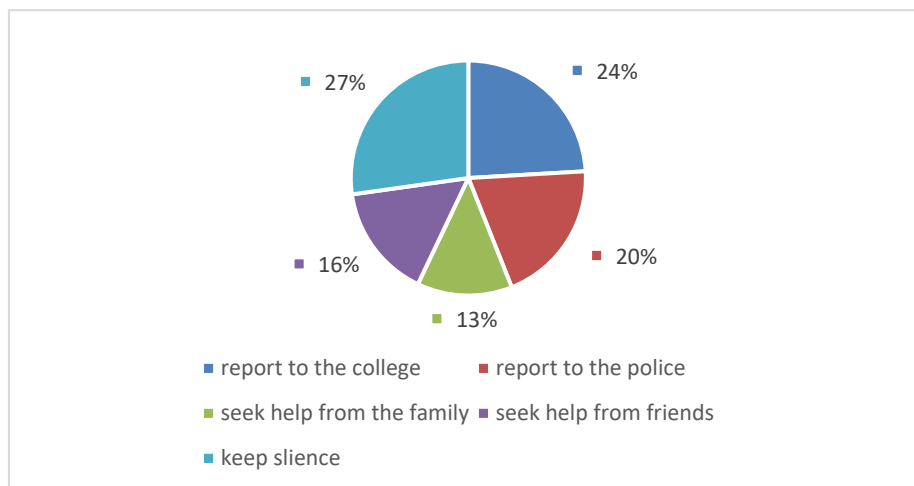


Figure 5. The reaction of 192 victims after being bullied

When asked if they know the reason of bullying, out of 192 victims, 65 victims state that the perpetrators hate them or want to revenge; 48 victims state that the perpetrators are motivated to establish their authority; 43 victims state that the perpetrators want to despoil financial or material benefits; 20 victims state that the perpetrators are jealous; 16 victims state that they know nothing about the motive of bullying. (shown in Figure 6)

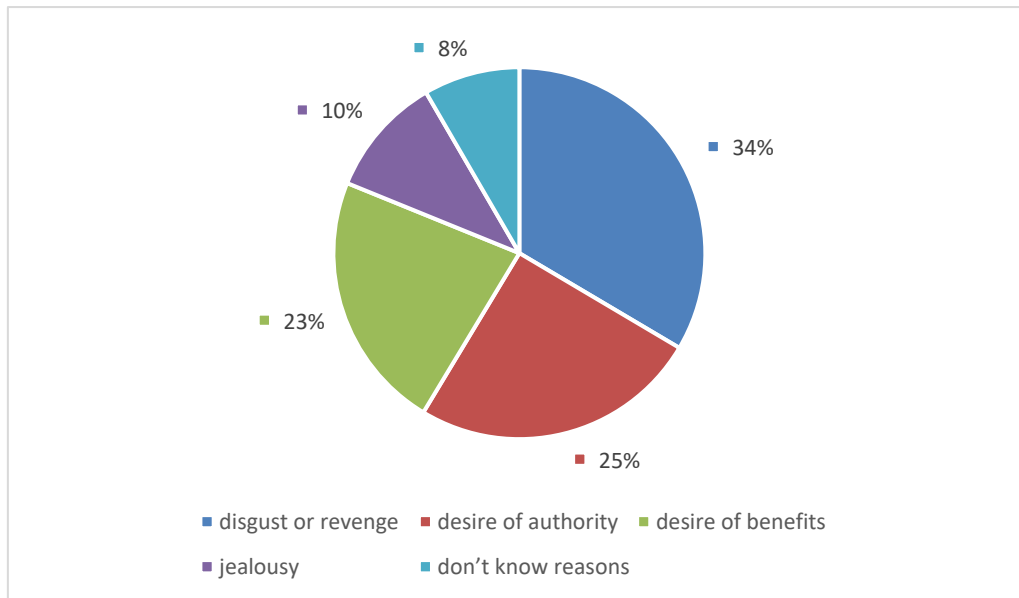


Figure 6. The motives of the perpetrators

When asked why they were the victims, 52 victims state that they are physically weak; 48 victims state that they have weak personality; 35 victims state that they lack friends; 25 victims state that they are not valued by teachers; 23 victims state that they are randomly selected by the perpetrators; 10 victims state that they don't know the reason. (shown in Figure 7)

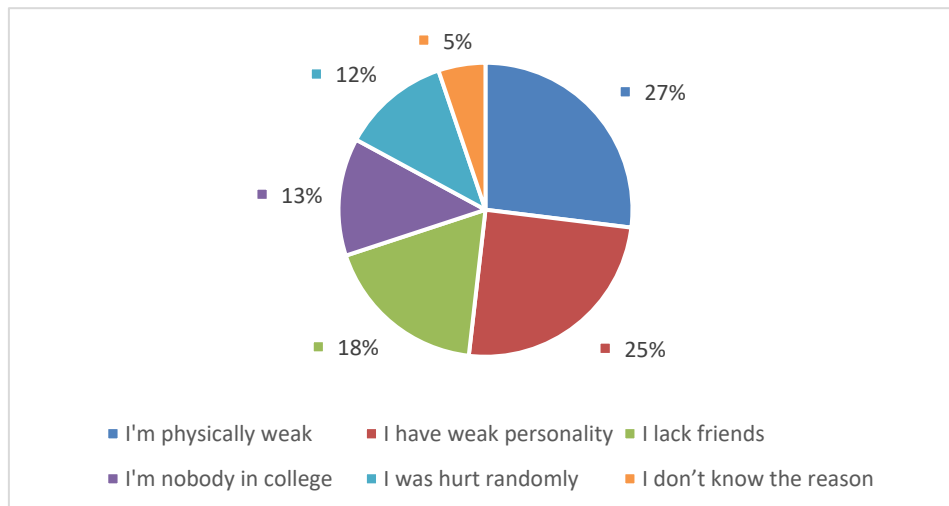


Figure 7. Why would they be victims

Out of 192 victims, 69% (133 students) stated that they had personal conflicts with the perpetrators before being bullied. When asked about what type of conflicts between them, 77 students chose daily frictions; 27 students chose economic disputes; 12 students chose competitive relationship; 10 students chose emotional disputes; 7 students chose other conflicts. (shown in Figure 8)

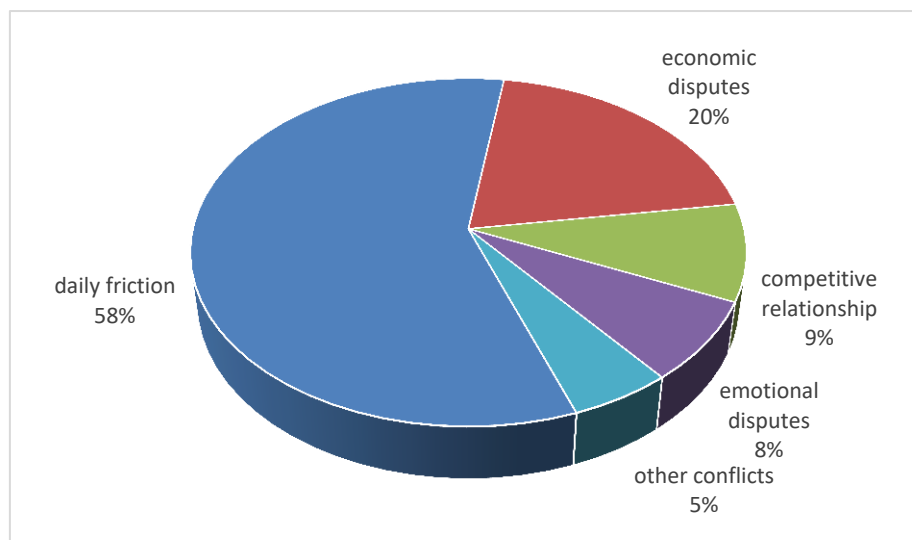


Figure 8. The type of conflicts between 133 victims and their perpetrators

When asked how to prevent campus bullying, 182 victims (95%) noted safety management of the colleges should be strengthened; 173 victims (90%) noted Legal punishment should be strengthened; 134 victims (70%) noted bullying prevention education should be paid more attention; 131 victims (68%) mentioned physical and psychological quality of themselves need to be improved, 96 victims (50%) mentioned more social assistance should be provided to avoiding college bullying; 87 victims (45%) mentioned that the family education for college students should also be strengthened.

#### 4. Conclusion

Through the survey, following conclusions have been drawn:

No.1 The respondents' understanding of mental bullying is not as accurate as their understanding of physical bullying. Many students in vocational colleges have insufficient awareness of the danger of mental bullying. Therefore, the colleges should strengthen campus bullying prevention education, especially the education of preventing mental bullying.

No.2 Females are the main victims of campus bullying in vocational colleges. Sexual insult has been a common form of campus bullying in those colleges. Therefore, the colleges should strengthen the safety protection of female students, especially their sexual safety.

No.3 Students in vocational colleges have insufficient understanding of the harm of verbal abuse, which has been the second most common form of campus bullying. Therefore, the prevention education related to verbal abuse should be particularly emphasized.

No.4 After bullying occurs, the likelihood of being bullied again for the victims who exposed the cases is much lower than those victims who kept silence. So, in the prevention education, victims should be encouraged to expose bullies bravely.

In addition, the author also advocates for preventing campus bullying through enhancing the campus safety management, strengthening the punishment for bullying, and strengthening the prevention education.

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