A Comparative Study of the Causes and Countermeasures of School Violence in China and South Korea

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Abstract: China and South Korea are both Asian countries and school violence has long been a common problem for them. This paper discusses the causes and countermeasures of school violence from five aspects – students, families, schools, society, and government, and summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of the two countries on this issue. A better strategy that suits the national conditions of the two countries is proposed against the new forms of current school violence. It is found that the two countries need to continuously improve their laws, implement policies, and develop training in schools and professional institutions. They need to make parents and all walks of life emphasize on the problem and take action so that multi-efforts will be integrated to solve school violence.

Keywords: school violence, comparative study, causes, countermeasures

1.   Introduction

School violence is an important cause of youth suicide and depression and has a huge impact on the development of the entire society. The South Korean government has long been concerned about the seriousness of the problem. They have established a relevant regulation system and adopted a novel scientific and effective model, thus achieving phased governance results. In comparison, China does not pay enough attention to the issue of school violence in the early stage, lacks legislation, and has relatively backward mediation methods and systems. However, with the attention and intervention of the Chinese government and all walks of life on this issue in recent years, Chinese schools and families have taken a series of effective measures to alleviate the deterioration of school violence under the call of the government. In the meantime, with the continuous development of science and technology, the forms of school violence are constantly changing. Therefore, the two countries need to make adjustments in face of this issue.

2.   Comparison of the causes of school violence

This paper will compare and analyze the causes of school violence from the aspects of the students' personal physical, psychological, physical, and mental development, the family structure, education, school system, and related institutions, and the development of society and the Internet, as well as from government levels.

2.1. The student level

The personal factors in China and South Korea are universal. Teenagers in both countries have imbalanced physical and mental development as well as the physical instinct of attacking and imitating. At the same time, boys in the two countries are more inclined to beating and other physical violence, while girls prefer verbal abuse. Minors are immature in their physical and mental development and lack the ability to distinguish right from wrong. Once they come into contact with unscrupulous youth groups, they are very likely to indirectly trigger school violence. From a physiological perspective, studies [1] have shown that individuals with violent, aggressive or anti-social behaviors have functional defects in the frontal and temporal lobes. In terms of victims, frail or sick teenagers are more likely to be bullied [2]. At the same time, obese children are more likely to be rejected and ridiculed than others or to become victims of school violence [3]. At present, school violence, except online violence, in the two countries is showing a younger trend of age. According to a South Korean survey, the incidence of violence in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades of elementary schools reached 18.2%, 16.1%, and 12.9% respectively [4]. Elementary school students suffered online violence, verbal abuse, and rejection 8 or 9 times more than middle school students [5]. School bullying reports in China [6] also reflect that younger students are more likely to experience school violence. Imitation psychology [7]and peer effect are also common among minors. A survey in South Korea shows that 67% of the population will mention violent words or sentences in their daily communication, and peer effect is an important reason for this phenomenon.

2.2. The family level

The changes in the family structure and the weakening of the parent-child relationship in South Korea and China may lay hidden dangers for school violence. In terms of the education model and environment, suppressive education is more common in South Korea than in China, while spoiling education is the majority in China.

2.2.1. Changes in family structure alienate the relationship between parents and children

Nowadays, the traditional family model tends to disappear, and dual-career families and nuclear families have become popular. Numerous studies have shown that a close parent-child relationship will reduce the possibility of children suffering from interpersonal harms [5]. Parents in dual-career families work outside for a long time, and their children lack companionship and communication, which increases the possibility of forming gangs with peers. In addition, children who grow up in a special family environment are also more likely to have psychological problems due to the lack of care, which further leads to school violence. Compared with China, most Korean families retain a patriarchal family structure [8]. Children are in a subordinate family position, and it is easy for them to accumulate negative emotions from the family and release them to others through violence.

2.2.2. Family environment and education create different personalities

Family education will affect the formation of adolescents' personalities. Children who grow up in a positive family atmosphere will not easily fall into the dilemma of school violence. The probability of indulgent family education is higher in Chinese families than in South Korea. In China, teenagers mostly grow up spoiled by their parents. They tend to be self-centered, sensitive, irritable, and prone to disputes with their classmates. The subordinate family structure in South Korea is somewhat similar to suppressive education. Parents use compulsory methods to control their children, demanding kids to follow their wills, and advocating the principle of "spare the rod, spoil the child". This model can easily trigger children's resistance and rebellion, who will eventually imitate their

parents and solve problems through violence. The above two education modes will probably bring hidden dangers of school violence.

2.3. The school level

Overall, South Korea's governance system, mediation organization, and strategies at this level have novel and superior advantages over China, but both countries have the problem of focusing on scores and ignoring liberal education.

2.3.1. Different school management system and structure

As the main incident place of school violence, the school management system in China is worse than that in South Korea. South Korea has established a countermeasure autonomous committee composed of parent representatives, teachers, police, and experts, and adopted a peer mediation mechanism [9] to jointly play a role in the prevention, mediation, and psychological counseling of school violence. In addition, the committee can apply for a variety of professional assistance from the "SOS Support Team against School Violence" during the mediation process, and both parties will regularly carry out training and seminars to improve their business capabilities. However, China does not have a complete governance system in schools. Only some schools have established relevant autonomous committees for countermeasures, and their professionalism and management capabilities need to be improved.

2.3.2. Lack of legislation and liberal education due to the score-oriented trend

Under the sharply-increased pressure of higher education, most schools are pursuing a higher school-entrance rate, and the teachers also work this way. Therefore, Chinese and Korean schools regard the school-entrance rate as teaching goals and mandatory examination as assessment methods, forming a score evaluation system and ignoring liberal education [4]. On the one hand, the tremendous pressure brought by further studies can easily make young people psychologically imbalanced. On the other hand, the lack of liberal education prevents young people from having correct values and lays dangers for solving problems with violence.

2.3.3. Poor education mode and teachers' lack of responsibility

Teachers not only need to teach, but also need to pay attention to their own words and deeds. Many teachers do not have standard educational qualities and treat students differently, so that unwelcome students will have a feeling of inferiority and the "favored" students will have the courage and opportunity to oppress their classmates. In order to solve this problem, South Korea issued the 2018 Education Development Plan for School Violence Prevention, which emphasizes the training of teachers in school violence prevention. According to a survey, there were 8,929 people trained in this program in South Korea in 2017, of which 993 had consulting training and 7,936 had remote training [10]. In comparison, most vocational teachers in China will receive training of professional knowledge and liberal education, but their understanding of school violence is not comprehensive enough.

2.4. The society level

Due to the differences in the society and culture of the two countries, South Korean teenagers may be more likely to enter into school conflicts due to personal interests or concepts of respect and inferiority. With the popularity and development of the Internet, the possibility that teenagers in both countries indulge in unhealthy games or videos leading to violence has greatly increased.

2.4.1. The social and cultural differences between the two countries

As is known to all, South Korea is a capitalist country while China is a socialist country. Therefore, China advocates putting the interests of the country and society in the first place, and supports collective spirit and team strength. On contrary, South Korea pays attention to personal interests while values national interests and development [11]. Social and cultural differences extend to schools. Chinese students pay more attention to the group achievement, reducing the possibility of conflicts due to excessive pursuit of personal gains and losses, thereby reducing the probability of school violence.

In Korea, the obsession of hierarchy is deeply rooted [12]. In schools, the lower grades suffer from school violence because they fail to address the upper grades in honorific terms or compete with the upper grades. In contrast, in China, regardless of grades, students can communicate equally, and only ability is taken as the standard. Therefore, the incidence of school violence brought about by the hierarchical system in China is much less than that in South Korea.

2.4.2. The development of the Internet breeds cyberbullying

In the information age, the problem of cyberbullying in both countries is serious. In 2021, a South Korean research report stated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, South Korean students suffered from cyberbullying tripled, accounting for 16.3% of all the bullying forms. The flooding of negative information makes it easy for young people to immerse themselves in the virtual world and weaken the moral codes in real life [7]. China attaches great importance to this phenomenon and began to block vulgar entertainment or unhealthy video content a few years ago [13]. August 19, 2020, the Ministry of Education issued a notice on the joint development of a special governance action for the online environment for minors and put forward that efforts should be paid to manage various pornographic and vulgar webpages [14]. In South Korea, the regulator adopts a grading system that divides films and artistic works into five levels according to age [15]. However, a material made public in 2016 showed that South Korean TV stations could not achieve real-time monitoring, and nearly 40% of teenagers would watch movies and television works regardless of the ratings. Therefore, Korean teenagers have more access to unhealthy information from these cultural products. These unhealthy information and vulgar works are important reasons for school violence.

2.4.3. Comparison of social forces in the two countries

South Korea has added public forces to the prevention and control of school violence. South Korean citizens have a higher sense of participation in prevention and control. Many Korean companies are willing to provide funds, and social organizations are willing to participate. The participation of professionals and non-professionals in South Korea has attracted the attention of citizens, making the prevention and popularization of school violence more effective. At the same time, it makes up the weakness of schools, families, and the government, which greatly reduces the possibility of recurrence of school violence. In contrast, China's public participation is low, and social professionals lack the awareness of active participation. The handling of school violence is limited to schools, governments, and families, which is too simple and far from effective [7].

2.5. The government level

The South Korean government has long established a special law on school violence, and is constantly revising and improving it. The government has also implemented more comprehensive supervision over the implementation of this law. In comparison, China has only promulgated a series of relevant

regulations. Without specific laws, there will only be weak enforcement and low public attention. The level of supervision and enforcement also needs to be improved.

2.5.1. Comparison of laws and policies in the two countries

In 2004, South Korea promulgated the Act on the Prevention of and Countermeasures against Violence in Schools. The law has gone through the second and third revisions in 2008 and 2012, and is still being improved, but its content and structure are relatively complete [16]. In addition, South Korea has also issued Comprehensive Measures to Eliminate School Violence" and other regulations to further strengthen the management of school violence [1]. In comparison, dealing with school violence in China mostly uses the regulations in the Law on the Protection of Minors, Law on the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, and other laws. No specific laws and regulations have been established. For example, on June 1, 2021, the Ministry of Education promulgated the Provisions on the Protection of Schools for Minors, which established a five-point special system against bullying and sexual assault in campus, clarified school regulations and specfic protection systems, and mentioned school management requirements and protection mechanisms. However, China has always been in a stage of dealing with these phenomena as incidents. Relevant regulations are not compulsory enough, and the attention of all sectors of society needs to be increased. Therefore, the formulation of laws needs to be strengthened.

2.5.2. Comparison of supervision and management mechanisms

The South Korean government takes the lead in the prevention and control of school violence. In addition to the establishment of specialized agencies such as the "Youth Violence Prevention Group", South Korea has clarified and strengthened the responsibilities and obligations of the main body of prevention and control of school violence. For example, it is clearly stipulated that the "supervisor", the main person in charge of the local school, needs to organize a twice-a-year investigation on school violence management. Relevant agencies will use the results as the basis to formulate further countermeasures against school violence [17]. In terms of supervision, China only develops joint support and supervision of the education department, civil administration, people's court, and judicial departments through regulations. It is enough to show that South Korea has done more comprehensively in the supervision of school violence.

3. Countermeasures and suggestions against school violence

Based on the above reasons, the following parts will compare and analyze from the five aspects of individual, family, school, society, and government, summarizing the advisable policies in the two countries, pointing out what they can learn from each other, and proposing suggestions and possible measures based on the current situation.

3.1. Teenagers need to enhance their legal awareness and personal endurance

Most adolescents grow up in favorable circumstances, and have weak psychological endurance and self-regulation consciousness. When confronted with adversity, they will possibly shirk responsibility which leads to conflicts with friends. Therefore, young people should learn to adjust their mentality and awareness, trying their best to cooperate with classmates to complete tasks and solve problems rationally. In addition, primary and secondary school students lack legal awareness of school violence. Therefore, it is necessary to actively provide lectures and related activities of the knowledge of school violence in schools and society. Teenagers also need to actively participate in the activities to

understand the effective prevention and resolution of school violence through the combination of theory and practice.

3.2. Families need to nurture teenagers with psychological fitness

The above has mentioned the impact of a healthy family structure and family education on teenagers. Therefore, parents should first create a good family environment for their children. A democratic education method should be adopted to raise children. The survey shows that children growing up in a democratic environment have mutual respect with their parents, can listen patiently and express themselves actively, and have the ability to think independently and coordinate problem-solving. They are less likely to actively or passively come across school violence. Secondly, parents should learn to get closer to their children, taking some time every day for communication to know their children's physical and mental changes in real-time and cultivate awareness of school violence prevention since childhood. Finally, parents need to communicate with the school more often. Once a problem is discovered, it is necessary to contact the teacher in time and together find out the reasons and countermeasures to cut loss in time.

3.3. The schools need to improve the educational concept, teachers' behavior, and institutions

No matter in China or South Korea, schools should abandon the score-oriented attitude and purpose and should focus more on the development of liberal education and the cultivation of personality. Schools should regularly carry out liberal education in the early, middle, and late stage of schooling, and conduct periodic result inspections through questionnaires and other methods. In addition, some scholars have mentioned the restoration of the traditional Korean value of "loyalty", that is, using empathy and emotions to deal with violence [18]. This is also applicable in China. The strengthening of "empathy" is also the strengthening of national culture and moral quality. In addition, according to the above comparative analysis of the management of school violence in Chinese and Korean schools, China also needs to learn from South Korea's mediation committee and establish a special agency to better deal with school violence within the campus. At the same time, peer-regulation projects should be actively carried out to allow teenagers to share their worries and improve communication skills.

3.4. Society should solve the problems with collective awareness, cultural supervision, and public strengths

With the impact of the general environment, the youth in the two countries lacked collective consciousness. However, based on South Korea's national conditions and social system, it is unrealistic to fully realize collectivism. Therefore, South Korea should focus on publicity, advocating the spirit of cooperation and team interest and healthy competition, and severely suppressing the bullying of newcomers or younger generations by the elderly relying on hierarchy and honorific terms. China also needs to continue to promote collectivism, so that young people can have a deeper sense of teamwork. In terms of the screen culture, South Korean supervision departments should increase the management of film and television companies and require strict implementation of the rating system. Some videos that spread extremely harmful information should be banned. In addition, both China and South Korea should regularly investigate and clean up online platforms and websites, and deal with spam, advertisements, and unhealthy websites seriously. In terms of public participation, the participation of Chinese enterprises and public forces is less than that in South Korea. Therefore, China needs to pay more attention to the participation of enterprises and other social organizations. In addition to financial assistance, social organizations in the two countries should also give full play to their respective strengths to better intervene in school violence.

3.5. The government needs to enhance the implementation of legislation, supervision, and publicity

In order to attract the attention of citizens and increase the intensity of control, the Chinese government should learn from South Korea and establish specific laws and regulations on school violence. In terms of supervision, the supervision force and inspection frequency of the two countries are far from enough. The inspection frequency should be increased from twice a year to more than four times a year, and schools and related institutions are required to reflect on themselves regularly and make reports and conclusions. The government should also set up a special reporting and complaint center to publicly criticize and punish schools and social organizations that fail to perform their duties properly. In addition, the government can actively promote civilized language and preventive measures against school violence in public areas such as subway stations and bus stations. In addition, the government can cooperate with traditional media and self-media platforms such as Weibo to spread the knowledge of school violence to all aspects of life.

4. Conclusion

The causes of school violence in China and South Korea are quite different on family, school, social and cultural background, and government levels, but they have similarities in the physical and mental development of students. Both countries should proceed from their own national conditions, establish democratic family environment, build a harmonious atmosphere in schools, pay attention to the cultivation of moral quality, and let young people have more healthy psychology and personality. Enterprises and organizations should pay more attention to school violence and actively participate in the prevention, control, and mediation of school violence. The governments of both countries need to implement strict supervision on schools and social enterprises so that the laws and regulations against school violence can be implemented. Only when individuals, families, schools, society, and the government unite to make fundamental improvements and implementations can the problem of school violence be alleviated.

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