

An Analysis of School Violence Policy Changes in China from a Historical Neo-institutionalism Perspective

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China has developed countermeasures and relevant policies to effectively respond to and prevent violence in schools since 2002. The purpose of this study was to explore factors that would affect policy changes in school violence from a historical neo-institutionalism perspective. A huge volume of relevant literature was collected and examined on changes in school violence policies in China and the factors that would affect them. At the institutional level, it was observed that the ruling party's people-centered philosophy of governance and increasing emphasis on school safety in China have induced policymakers to focus on justice and the protection of vulnerable groups' rights and interests. At the structural level, the findings showed that the main turning point in breaking the path of dependence on school violence policies was the school violence cases that caught significant social attention. Formal and informal actors published statements and public opinion hence drawing the government's attention to incidents of school violence. These findings indicate that policy improvements in school violence should not only depend on external shocks at the structural level, but on a future view that anticipates future changes in school violence and adopts a responsive approach. Secondly, a system of cooperation should be established among the various actors who can effectively prevent school violence and develop efficacious strategies to respond to school violence. Thirdly, the relevant institutions should explore the sustainability of policies. Fourthly, it is important to increase the channels through which the public can provide feedback on the effectiveness of policy implementation to government policymakers and regularly access the views of the public on policy settings. Fifthly, policymakers should pay more attention to the opinions of working and professional people to minimize incidences of school violence. Sixth, the relevant authorities should establish a reasonable linkage system to operate as effectively as possible and bring the various functions into play to prevent school violence.

Keywords: School violence policy, historical neo-institutionalism, China, structural level, institution level, actor level

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1. Necessity and purpose of the study

School violence is a global social problem. According to UNESCO's Report (2018), about 32% of students worldwide are victims of school violence. The report indicates that physical and sexual violence are the most common forms of school bullying. Similar findings of violence in schools have been reported in China. A survey was conducted by the China Youth Research Centre in 2018 whereby 5,864 primary and secondary school students from 10 Chinese provinces and cities were surveyed. The results of the survey showed that 32.5% of elementary and secondary school pupils were occasionally bullied, whereas 6.1% of the participants were frequently bullied by their senior classmates (Teng & Yao, 2018).

The Supervisory Steering Committee of the State Council issued the Notice on Special Treatment of School Bullying in 2016, which marked the start of China's administrative management of school violence. A policy was developed to improve the prevention and handling of violence in schools. The Measures for Special Supervision of Safety Work in Primary and Secondary Schools (Kindergartens), a policy document to implement the CPC Central Committee and the State Council proposal and provide guidelines on ensuring school safety, was promulgated in December 2016. This policy promotes the establishment of a scientific, standardized, and institutionalized safety protection system and operational mechanism for preventing violence in primary and secondary schools (kindergartens). In addition, it enhances safety risk prevention and control strategies.

The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, and other 11 departments jointly issued the Program on Strengthening Comprehensive Management of Bullying among Primary and Secondary School Students in 2017. This is a policy for establishing a feasible long-term mechanism for preventing and controlling violence and bullying among primary and secondary school students. But China did not have a law that specifically addressed violence in schools until 2021. Therefore, this study sought to explore the policies related to school violence promulgated by the central government during and after the Eleventh Five-Year Plan period.

These policy documents mainly focus on the administrative management of school violence in primary and secondary schools, promote the establishment of a safe and harmonious campus, and promote the physical and mental health of youth. However, there are several limitations in the implementation process due to a lack of practical experience and a short introduction time, so the effect of the countermeasures on

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managing school violence is not significant (Wang, 2021).

A literature search shows that research articles on Chinese school violence were initially published on the China Knowledge Website after the 1990s. Only three research articles on school violence were published in China between 1991 and 1995. China is currently in the period of the Eighth Five-Year Plan, which is a period of marked China's reform and a period of setting the economic goals for the country. The state is mainly focused on economic development, so, incidences of school violence have been neglected. The number of articles published on school violence gradually increased between 1996 and 2000, which is the Period of China's Ninth Five-Year Plan. Scholars in China are currently showing an increased interest in domestic school violence research after studying the status of violence in schools in other countries and understanding the actual situation in China. The number of articles on school violence in the CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) database increased to 165 during the Ten Five-Year Plans between 2001 and 2005. Several studies have been conducted to explore school violence in depth from various academic and research perspectives. Several studies have also been conducted on the causes and preventive measures of school violence between 2006 and 2010. Scholars have conducted in-depth research from various academic perspectives as well as path analysis of school violence from multiple perspectives from 2011 to 2015. School violence received national attention between 2016 and 2020. As a result, research articles on the legal prevention of school violence have significantly increased in the recent past (Wei, Wei & Wang, 2021).

In summary, few scholars have studied and analyzed the process of change in school violence-related policies from a historical perspective by reviewing the literature on school violence in the modern era. The present study adopts a historical neo-institutionalist approach to explore how laws related to school violence prevention and response have changed and the factors that have induced these changes. Historical neo-institutionalism views institutions such as laws as historical products and the institutions can be accounted for without understanding the historical lineage of their formation and change process (Ha, 2011; Pierson & Skocpol, 2002).

That is, to properly understand and account for the phenomenon of school violence and the effects of school violence responses, it is necessary to understand relevant institutions such as school violence-related policies. From this perspective, this study considers China's school violence policies as a historical institution, and its purpose is to analyze the historical thread and factors that have influenced the changes in this policy and to propose effective directions for school violence prevention and response.

2. Research questions

To achieve the purpose of the research, the following research questions were formulated.

1. How has the school violence policy in China changed?
2. What are the factors associated with the changes in school violence policy in China?

Analytical framework

1. Institutional factors

The institution is the core variable of policy formation and change. The choice of actors and institutional changes are achieved under the provisions of the institutional environment. Institutions are the central variable in policy establishment and change, and actors' choices and efforts to change institutions are determined by the institutional environment.

Institutions are formed as a result of the activities of past actors, which ultimately govern the behavior of actors (Roh, 2006). This implies that the structure of the systems, the preferences of the main policy groups, and the choice margin of future decision-makers vary depending on how the initial policies were established (Kim, 2012). Institutions are affected, reoriented, or re-formed as a result of the effects of institutions on individual and group stakeholders and power relations, formation and opposition of preferences, goals and strategies, as well as opportunities and limitations of the implementation of the policies (Ha, 2001).

Historical neo-institutionalism mainly focuses on the historical lineage of institutions that shape or constrain the behavior of actors. This institutional lineage indicates the emergence of composite organizational and institutional configurations that combine social ideas, social cultures, regulations and procedures, and policy decision processes in various ways (Ha, 2011). The institutional factors that modulate institutional change vary according to the subject and vector of study because of the various meanings and levels of institutions or institutional vectors. This study explored the institutional-level factors such as social philosophy, policy decision processes, social consciousness, and culture that affect policy change in school violence based on the above theoretical foundation.

2. Structural factors

Historical neo-institutionalism is the main factor that modulates institutional change, emphasizing exogenous factors at a structural level (Jang, 2015; Lee, 2011). External factors include major opportunities such as regime changes, political and economic crises, demographic shifts, and the occurrence of events that promote change in existing institutions (Ikenberry, 1988).

These external shocks lead to critical incidences that fundamentally change the face of the system, resulting in a system that is path-dependent and focused on sustaining a state of punctuated equilibrium for a certain period (Krasner, 1988). Historical neo-institutionalism is a major cause of institutional change, including the upstream pathway of the system macro, domestic structures, and structures that change gradually according to the historical pathway. In addition, war and revolution modulate institutional change (Kim, 2005).

Therefore, this study at the structural level focused on major school violence incidents.

3. Actor factors

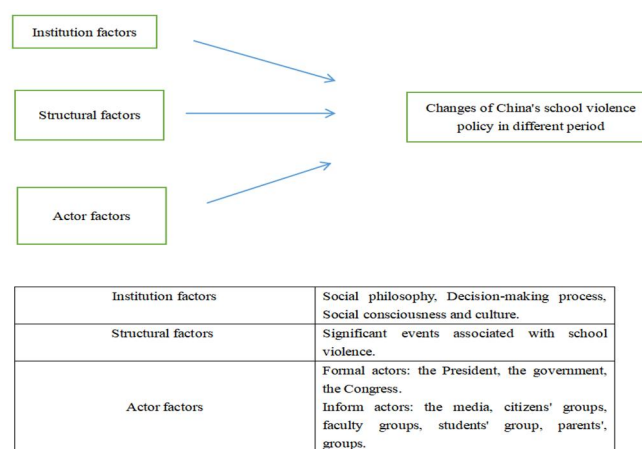
Historical neo-institutionalism indicates that actors are objects that are affected by macro-structures and institutions, as well as subjects that maintain and promote change in institutions. This implies that actors are individuals or groups that shape policies under the constraints of the institutional environment (Lee, 2011). Under institutional constraints, actors use ideas to promote policy change or strategically use unequal power relations such as conflict, struggle, negotiation, and arbitration to change existing policies as well as form new policies to achieve their objectives.

Actors use uneven power relations to champion or change policies to achieve their interests and objectives in situations that become critical junctures of institutional change. The actors who carry out such purposive actions can be classified as formal and informal actors. The scope and magnitude of actors' influence vary depending on their role, status, power, and period of institutional change (Kim, 2005).

Therefore, in this study at the structural level, formal actors directly involved in policy decisions in the current study include the government and the National Assembly, and informal actors indirectly influencing policy decisions include the media, citizens' groups, faculty groups, students' groups, and parents' groups.

The specific analytical framework diagram is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Analytical framework



Method

1. Object of research

Due to the differences in China's national conditions before and after the 11th Five-Year Plan, social development has changed dramatically, and most of the local policies are only further amendments and refinements based on the policies issued by the central party and government departments, with no major differences. As of 2021, China does not have a law that specifically addresses violence in schools. Therefore, among the first documents in this study are documents from government departments, minutes of national conferences, and texts of policies related to violence in schools in China. The second literature includes academic papers, academic dissertations, judicial case documents, news reports, etc.

2. Data collection and analysis

In this study, government publications, statistical data, judicial cases, professional books, academic papers, and dissertations were used to examine content such as government policies related to school violence in China. The above materials were obtained from CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) (<https://chn.oversea.cnki.net/index/>), Peking University Law (<http://www.pkulaw.cn/>), and the Korean RISS website (<http://www.riss.kr.libproxy.jnu.ac.kr/>) and Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.com/>) was used to search for the theoretical background and relevant literature. The keywords used in the search were ‘校园暴力政策 (school violence policy)’, ‘校园欺凌政策 (school bullying policy)’, ‘校园安全政策 (school safety policy)’, ‘校园暴力 (school violence)’, ‘校园欺凌 (school bullying)’, ‘校园安全 (school safety)’, ‘역사적신제도주의 ’ and ‘Historical Neo-institutionalism’. According to Choi (1985), literature research is to collect and process data source literature, and then make conclusions through interpretation and demonstration. The main contents are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Data Collection

Four components of educational curriculum	D-aspects	S-aspects
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Educational objective	▫ Change to selecting educational objectives ▫ More considerations required while selecting educational objectives	Immediate reflection of learner's needs
Content	▫ Dramatic change to the construction of content ▫ Subjects that need to be taken down	Diversity of content
Process of learning experience	▫ Dramatic change to teaching-learning situation	Diversity of learning Experiences
Evaluation	▫ Change to evaluation of academic achievement ▫ Evaluation of problem solving and higher order thinking skills	Diversity of evaluation methods

Results

1. Factors influencing changes in school violence policy in the Embryonic period

(2002-2010)

1) Institutional factors

In 1995, China was in the midst of the eighth Five-Year Plan era (1991–1995), a period of rapid reform and the goal of establishing a market economy. Because the government was focused on economic growth, it paid little attention to campus security. Thus, at that time, the governance of campus security in China had been limited to the 「Education Law of the People's Republic of China」 and the 「Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Minors」.

In 1995, China announced the implementation of a science and education-based strategic policy. Thus, under the guidance of this background, the task of higher education is no longer just talent cultivation, which enhances the quality of education and scientific research. For a long time, the Party and the government have paid an increasing amount of attention to the healthy growth of teenagers. Government decision-makers have made efforts for providing security for teenagers' campus safety by issuing laws and regulations and special handling of focus events.

Thus, in this context, the protection of student safety is not limited to the 「Education Law」 and the 「Law on the Protection of Minors」. In 2002, more detailed Measures for Handling Student Accidents and Injuries, which stipulate the responsibility of schools as well as families in educating students, had been formulated based on the contents of these two laws.

For a long time, schools have prioritized educational modernization and management as the primary focus of school governance, while disregarding minors' rights and interests. According to the National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan Outline, the Ministry of Education's strategic goal of achieving education modernization (2010–2020) was announced in 2010 and the schools naturally place the improvement of education and teaching level at the top of all work. Therefore, the intrinsic value of students' growth and humanistic care for their development have been ignored, and the school's obligation to protect minors was neglected. Although the 「Law on the Protection of Minors」 in 2012 provides for school protection in the form of a special chapter, unfortunately, there are still problems because of the above law content with principle, advocacy, lack of rigid constraints and field specification.

Thus, the school has not caused high attention. Also, the active implementation of the school governance work has not put the protection of minor students, education, management, and other work in a similarly important position. Once, there had been an imbalance of emphasis on education and light protection, which is also a significant reason for improper school protection. It has been based on the severe situation of the high incidence of juvenile infringement cases and weak protection of minors in the school field, under the new situation that the new policy comes into existence at the right moment (Xiao & Zhang, 2021). China at this stage of education legislation has usually taken a question guide mode of legislation (Sun & Liu, 2021). More often, the lack of procedure of the macro consideration is found, which is that the problem after the legislation at all levels of the section has been set forth, resulting in the content of the Chinese education laws and regulations being relatively fragmented, unable to present harmony between the size of the system.

The dispersion of education rules and regulations is reflected in the lack of abstract provisions on many essential themes in relevant legislation. Law development has experienced from the individual to the general provisions of the course. Also, this kind of general provisions are abstract. It is a phenomenon of legislation for specific law of macroscopic and the highly concentrated regulation. Therefore, This phenomenon develops a hierarchy of harmonious system of norms, up and down every level between the specification of the intrinsic logical relation. Moreover, it constitutes an independent legal system, and various levels of

the legal system further constitute a code. Thus, a reasonable legal system needs to be an effective combination of high-level abstract provisions as well as low-level specific provisions, instead of a simple patchwork of scattered contents.

Nevertheless, the conflict between regulations and educational laws often results in the existence of two or more contradictory educational legal norms on the same educational issue, which provides the educational administrative organs or judicial organs with a greater right to select the application of the law. The conflict present between the education laws and regulations would become weak. It will inevitably cause obstacles in the division of labor, cooperation, and law application of different educational administrative departments when laws and regulations stipulate multiple treatment schemes for the same educational matter. On the one hand, it would result in different educational administrative subjects of responsibility shirking, which influences the authority of educational administrative organs. On the other side, the conflicts between different departments would dissipate educational administrative resources, dissolve the resultant force of various departments, and then decrease the efficiency of educational administration (Ren, 2021).

Based on the above background, the governance of school violence in China has not been constrained to two laws, but in the subsequent stage, relevant policies specifically aimed at maintaining campus security were promulgated.

2) Structural factors

Even though, it could be concluded that no serious school violence occurred during this period through searching relevant cases on the special legal website of Peking University Law, after the popularization of nine-year compulsory education in China, an increasing number of students have equal rights to acquire education, so as the number of educated students expands, non-serious juvenile campus conflicts also happen occasionally. Based on this background, the government started to put the governance of youth campus safety problems on the work agenda and, to sustain campus safety, a huge number of policy documents were issued.

3) Actor factors

(1) Formal actors

The State Council released the Decision of the State Council on further strengthening production safety work on January 9, 2004, which emphasizes each unit must vigorously strengthen the construction of a safety culture, a public opinion atmosphere conducive to production safety, the safety consciousness of the

whole society, the construction of socialist harmonious society, and comprehend the safe development and develop a safe and stable environment.

Under the guidance of national policies linked to the government's governing ideas and the party, all departments formulate adolescent campus safety policies to complete the safety tasks in the field of education needed by the Party and the government. The realization of the safety goal in the field of education is an integral part of acquiring the overall safety goal at the national level.

2) Informal actors

When evaluating the feedback information after the implementation of campus safety policies, it has been discovered that, in recent years, there are quantitative standards for local reference on school meals, uniforms, school buildings, and other issues, thus, the implementation of policies in this area is good. However, little progress was made in combating bullying. The occurrence of youth school violence has not only not been contained but also intensified, and even caused the victims to commit suicide, revenge on society, as well as other serious consequences, the negative social impact of which could be seen. It is clear that China's regulations on campus security governance are ineffective at containing and punishing security events on campuses. Some policies even cancel the due means of punishment, which appears to protect the mental and physical safety of minors but weakens the deterrent function of policies on teenagers.

Moreover, most of China's policies on school violence only serve as guidance, advice, and warning, and there is also no defined norm for dividing responsibilities as well as dealing with issues once school violence occurs. Some policies and regulations even turn into reasons for the young perpetrators in school violence cases to not be harmed. As a result, victims of campus security problems and other members of the public continue to provide feedback on the policy's negative effects to the decision-making organs through both formal and informal channels, such as auditing cases by judicial organs and spontaneous demonstrations, while expressing their policy demands. This informal feedback has helped policymakers correctly understand the shortcomings of China's current school safety policies for young people, and the process of issuing specific policies on school violence in China.

2. Factors influencing changes in school violence policy in the Initial period

(2011-April 2016)

1) Institutional factors

2011–2015 is the period of implementation of the Twelfth Five-Year Plan in China, which also marks the beginning period of China's school violence policies. It has become an independent policy aim in the policy agenda. Its rules and regulations began to form tailored policies on the governance of campus security concerns, rather than merely continuing the experience in the governance of social public security issues.

The following policies are promoted to be implemented as a result of this social and cultural background: The Ministry of Education released the Notice of the General Office of the Ministry of Education on Doing a Good job in School Safety work in 2013, which states that school safety work should be done with care to safeguard that safety of school teachers and students' lives and property. And in the same year, the Guidance on Job Safety in Primary and Secondary Schools issued the primary as well as secondary school post-safety work guide with clear provisions: To safeguard the safety of teachers and students, as well as the stability and harmony of the campus, there was a need to increase primary and secondary school safety education and management, and firmly create the safety first mindset. And in 2015, the Ministry of Education issued the Safety Precautions for Primary and Secondary Schools and Kindergartens (Trial), which stipulates the prevention time, tasks, and measures clearly, for local as well as schools to do a good job of safety work and perform well in terms of safety to create a valuable reference base.

During the Twelfth Five-Year Plan (2011–2015), the Chinese government has been paying more attention to the issue of youth safety in schools, as well as several other initiatives have been implemented, with some positive consequences. However, there are still gaps in the administration of school safety concerns, and the government's evaluation of youth school safety issues during this time period has certain blind spots. Specifically, in the identification of school safety issues, the government's attention has always been on the promotion and education of the issue prior to its happening and the formulation of punitive measures after it occurs, with less focus given to the feedback on the impacts of the policy, which is not conducive to the optimization and improvement of the policy. Second, most of the school safety policies during the Twelfth Five-Year Plan period aimed to handle one sort of problem in a short time with one policy, neglecting the complexities of school safety concerns. This is a critical issue that has been disregarded during the Twelfth Five-Year Plan's (2011–2015) growth of school safety measures (Tian, 2019).

Thus, to strengthen the prevention as well as treatment of violence in schools, the relevant departments of the State Council released the Notice on Special Treatment of School Bullying in April 2016, which expressed the official attitude of our government in terms of dealing with and preventing bullying in schools nationally in the form of special treatment. The Circular first defines the scope of the special treatment of primary and secondary schools (including secondary vocational schools) globally, and then clearly defines

the concept of school violence, reflecting the specific focus of this special treatment. There is also a requirement for schools to improve their emergency plans for dealing with school violence as well as strengthen the duties and responsibilities of school teachers in dealing with school violence and make more detailed provisions for the prevention and handling of school violence.

2) Structural factors

In February 2016, during a routine visit to a social work organization, the Shanghai Huangpu District Procuratorate learned that a student, Jin (female, 17 years old), had been beaten as well as bullied by various classmates for up to two hours, with more than a dozen people watching as well as having videos taken and uploaded to a WeChat group, but the perpetrators were only policed. The case was suspected of being a crime only after the procuratorial authorities properly researched it, so they initiated a case supervision procedure and urged the public security authorities in order to open a case for investigation for the crime of forced insult.

During the prosecution stage, the prosecutor proposed that the three minors be placed on probation rather than the two adults. The court accepted the prosecutor's opinion as well as sentenced the five defendants to prison terms of two to three years for the offense of forced insult, with three of the minors receiving suspended sentences. The procuratorial authorities also issued procuratorial recommendations to the relevant functional departments, which require the strengthening of security forces in the areas surrounding the case, the installation of additional 110 network monitoring facilities, as well as the setting up of rule of law publicity boards in order to avoid the recurrence of similar cases.

In this typical legal case of school violence, we could see that the perpetrator of the event was only dealt with by the police in such a violent act of aggravated assault. In response to this, the Guidance on Prevention and Control of Bullying and Violence in Primary and Secondary Schools was issued in April 2016; Strengthening the responsibilities of the public security authorities as well as the judiciary became the primary direction of this change. For instance, appropriate corrective measures must be taken by the law for primary as well as secondary school students who commit violence. Both real care and genuine support need to be provided, as well as the deterrent impact of educational and disciplinary measures must be fully utilized.

3) Actor factors

(1) Formal actors

On November 8, 2012, Comrade Hu Jintao pointed out that satisfactory education should be provided to the people. Education that the people are satisfied with includes ensuring the safe growth of young people.

Two sessions of the National People's Congress were held in 2016. The Education Minister Yuan Guiren responded to school bullying by saying that education should prioritize family and societal education in addition to formal education, that he was also discussing violence in schools with members before the session, and that safety concerns had put the Ministry of Education under a lot of pressure. The government is also highly concerned regarding the violence in schools at a time when incidents of violence in schools are usually making headlines in the online media.

In the same year, in the Chinese government report, Premier Li Keqiang of the State Council issued instructions in order to create a system for preventing and controlling school violence, to take warnings early, and to implement remedial measures against school violence. The responsibilities of key agencies in regulating school violence should be defined, and a structure for dealing with the prevention and control of school violence needs to be constructed. Amid such authoritative language and views, then, the process of governance of school violence by the Chinese administration has been accelerated again.

(2) Informal actors

People's awareness of law and rights is increasing, as well as their pursuit in education is evolving from simply focusing on access to school to focusing on access to school while seeking solutions to school safety issues. Through different ways and channels, people are beginning to voice and complain about their attitudes toward school safety concerns. People follow as well as comment on focal incidents in school safety issues through hearings, the mayor's hotlines, microblogs, WeChat, Baidu postings, etc. Over 90% of commentators on focal incidents have been linked to campus safety. It has been believed that perpetrators of violence need to be treated with zero tolerance and dealt with strictly and seriously. As national sentiment continues to develop and accumulate, the government's concern for the issue keeps growing, and the issue of youth school safety has, therefore, turned into a priority for government policymakers when making policy goal choices.

3. Factors influencing changes in school violence policy in the Improvement

Period (May 2016-2021)

1) Institutional factors

The 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) held its Fifth Plenary Session in Beijing from October 26 to 29, 2015, which states that the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan period is a significant stage in building a moderately prosperous society and that the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan needs to be paid attention on closely. This goal must be at the center of the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan. The goal of building a moderately prosperous society across the board has become a joint effort of all ethnic groups, regions, and fields. Guided by the central government's development goals, the General Office of the State Council, the Ministry of Education, as well as other departments introduced policies in the education field to address existing issues in the field of education and work toward building a moderately prosperous society, which includes policies linked to school safety. Simultaneously, the series of policies on school safety for young people in China during the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan period is backed using the constant outbreak of school bullying as well as other school safety-related incidents. Not only was serious social harm caused by this test, but it also led to public doubts about the social governance capacity of the education sector, and the serious social consequences resulted in the issue of school safety for young people, especially the issue of school violence, which has drawn the attention of the administration and the party. Due to this very reason, violence in schools, a sub-issue in the field of school safety, has become a major policy objective during the period of policy improvement related to school violence.

2) Structural factors

In recent years, although school violence has been in the news frequently and has long been seen by all sectors of society as a major problem, endangering the school environment, the event at Zhongguancun No. 2 Primary School has brought this social problem to the forefront of the public's attention again.

This case happened on the morning of 24th November 2016, after Mingming, a student at Zhongguancun No. 2 Primary School in Haidian District, Beijing, entered the toilet. His classmates Junjun and Liangliang also walked into the toilet one after another. When Liangliang saw Mingming in the toilet, he picked up the waste basket from the toilet cubicle and tossed it at Mingming. Mingming followed him out after a quick wash at the toilet sink. On the evening of December 8, Mingming's mother drafted an essay titled Every mother and son is a friend in life and death, I want to accompany him to say NO to school bullying, in which she discussed Mingming's bullying experience, which highlighted that he was traumatized by the incident and had been incapable of continue attending lessons. His mother's article mentioned the bullying

episode that Mingming went through, stating that he was traumatized by the incident and could not continue attending classes, and blamed the school for the irresponsible attitude toward the incident. Many online media outlets and users slammed the announcement.

Zhongguancun No. 2 Primary School and the Haidian District Education Bureau both responded to the matter after the incident was fermented on the internet. Zhongguancun No. 2 Primary School responded to the matter at 11:41 pm on December 10: In the spirit of protecting the legitimate rights as well as interests of every minor child, particularly the principle of the harmed minors mentioned in the incident, the school would also make continuous efforts in order to try and obtain an outcome which is recognized by many parties.

In the second typical judicial case, the five defendants, including Zhu were all female students at a school in Beijing (all under the age of 18 at the time of the offense). On February 28th, 2017, the five defendants insulted a female student, Gao (17), and assaulted and verbally attacked a female student, Zhan (15), in a female dormitory building for no apparent cause. As per the discovery, the injuries of the second victim constituted minor injuries, as well as the actions of the five defendants also had the serious consequence of preventing the victim Gao from living and studying normally. It was held by the court that the defendant Zhu and others beat and abused others at will, which caused minor injuries to two people, seriously influenced the lives of others, violated the personal rights of citizens, as well as disrupted the social order, constituting the crime of provocation and nuisance, and is a joint crime. Consequently, the five defendants were sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging from eleven months to one year for the crime of provoking and provoking trouble. The five defendants' actions were not only a joke between classmates or a general violation of school rules and regulations, but a criminal act that needed to be punished by criminal law. If such behavior is trivialized simply because the defendants are minors, it will condone the crime, which is not only detrimental to the defendants' future healthy growth but could also not be providing protection to the minor victims.

In this context, compared with previous policies, the Program on Strengthening Comprehensive Management of Bullying among Primary and Secondary School Students released by the Ministry of Education in 2017 clearly explains school violence: Bullying of primary and secondary school students refers to bullying behavior that is intentionally or maliciously done by one party (individual or group) or repeatedly by using the body, language, network, and other means in and out of school (including primary and secondary vocational schools). It relates to an incident where one party (an individual or group) intentionally or maliciously, individually or repeatedly through physical, verbal, and Internet means, carries out bullying or insult, resulting in physical injury, property loss, or mental damage to the other party (an individual or

group). Practically speaking, bullying and playfulness need to be distinguished and handled properly. In the promotion of the comprehensive regulation of school violence against primary and middle school students, these two focal incidents played a positive role.

3) Actor factors

(1) Formal actors

As the discussion on school violence has attracted national public attention and responses from major online media, it pressurized the government in regards to the speed of implementing school violence control policies, and by taking advantage of the political platform of the National People's Congress, the deputies to the National People's Congress have proposed their ideas, adding many constructive elements to school violence control policies, while further strengthening the perception of the issue by top leaders.

The Communist Party of China's objective is to serve the people completely, and the Party prioritises the people's interests. The ultimate goal of the Party's guiding philosophy, and its general strategy and policy, is to seek additional benefits and advantages for all people. The essence of the Party's ruling philosophy is to genuinely serve the masses so that all the people could gain benefit from the victory brought about by the development of a socialist country. Due to the Party's people-centred governing ideology, officials have placed a higher focus on justice and the preservation of disadvantaged people's rights, as well as interests in the formulation of public policies.

Despite the fact that scholars and representatives of public opinion had already proposed solutions to tackle school violence before the incident at Zhongguancun No. 2 Primary School, the issue of school bullying has been left unresolved in comparison to other policy issues and has not been prioritized on the policy agenda. Influenced by the school violence incident at Zhongguancun No. 2 Primary School, the Ministry of Education initiated the drafting of a document in regards to combating school violence in December 2016 and invited experts from several fields to establish a working group with a view to formulating a targeted policy to combat school violence. Following the National People's Congress along with the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in March 2017, various NPC deputies and CPPCC members made recommendations for preventing and combating violence in schools, which had been seriously considered by the government as well as became a part of the Programme, with some modifications and additions.

(2) Informal actors

Recently, school violence has been frequently in the news and has long been regarded by all sectors of society as a major problem that endangers the school environment. The perpetrators of school violence

have been penalized so minimally, neglecting the physical and emotional anguish caused to the victims, which led to increased public condemnation of school violence and considerable discontent with the disciplinary measures adopted by the appropriate authorities.

The first to speak out was the online media: People's Daily, Xinhua, and Penghuang News Network commented on the school violence incident and called for the early promulgation of a school violence governance policy in order to define the boundaries of school violence. The succession of these incidents within a limited period is a reminder to us about the seriousness of school violence and that a social system to prevent school violence should be established.

In November 2017, the Ministry of Education once again joined ten departments in releasing the Program on Strengthening Comprehensive Management of Bullying among Primary and Secondary School Students. In contrast to the previous Notice on Special Treatment of Bullying in Schools as well as the Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of safety risk Prevention and Control System for Primary and Secondary Schools and Kindergartens collectively issued by nine departments, the programme suggests six new initiatives, provides a clear definition of bullying among students, stipulates the procedures for dealing with violence in schools as well as provides for graded measures in order to deal with it, stipulates different disciplinary measures for school violence having different circumstances, and particularly, for serious aggravated incidents with aggravating circumstances, clearly stipulates that it is possible, in serious cases of aggravated assault, that the perpetrator might be referred to a special school for education specifically. External public opinion, such as this, has impacted the strengthening of policies to prevent and respond to violence in schools.

Discussion

1. Summary

This study utilized a historical neo-institutionalist perspective, as well as this research analyzed the factors influencing China's school violence policy changes from 2002 to 2021 around structural, institutional, and actor factors. The structural factors examine major incidents of school violence that influenced the advancement of new policies, the institutional factors examine the ruling party's governing philosophy and the socio-cultural context, and the actor factors examine the government organizations, the media, citizen groups, parents, students, and faculty groups.

The analysis findings are listed below. At the structural level, those incidents of school violence, which impacted society, seem to have acted as a milestone in advancing and strengthening policies related to the management of school violence. At the institutional level, a fundamental examination of the government's philosophy of governance and the cultural philosophy of social development at each step gives an understanding of government departments' and society's shifting perceptions of school violence. The degree of awareness and prevention of school violence by the Party and the government varies, as does the focus of the resulting policies.

At the actor level, it has been split into formal and informal actors, and the Behavioral manifestations, as well as interactions of each actor, have been examined. It can be seen easily that informal actors are primarily looking to influence institutional improvements through modest means of expressing their opinions when school violence occurs. The media's ability to disseminate information and attract attention was crucial in changing public opinion.

The structural, institutional, as well as actor-level factors, which impact policies associated with school violence prevention and response, such as these, can be discussed from a historical neo-institutionalist perspective, as follows.

At first, the critical junctures that break the path-dependency of policy on school violence prevention and response occur mainly at the structural level. These major occurrences of school violence have had an impact on our society and, as a result, have influenced the system's construction and improvement. It is noteworthy that by reading the specifics of the policy, we could view that each case has advanced the concept of school violence more crucially as compared to generating an increasing amount of attention, as well as clarifying the direction of the various authorities in dealing with incidents of school violence.

Furthermore, the issue of violence in schools holds little influence on the power or interests of the actors regarding each other, which has prompted them to adopt primarily moderate patterns of behavior. The issue of violence in schools has a huge influence on our society, but it does not in itself impact the distribution of power or interests between formal and informal actors. Rather than taking a radical strategy, actors normally influence policy change by offering input.

Thirdly, the introduction of the Program on Strengthening Comprehensive Management of Bullying among Primary and Secondary School Students has gone through a process of gradual change, incorporating and assimilating previously introduced prevention and control policies. It serves as the most well-developed governance policy currently, and various administrations have utilized it as a blueprint when dealing with school violence; arguably, it would not be repealed for a certain period. However, as society evolves, the Program may be altered or replaced by a new school violence policy.

2. Discussion

The following directions for future changes in policies and institutions related to the prevention and response to violence in schools:

At first, institutional improvements associated with violence in schools must not rely on external shocks at the structural level but rather anticipate future situations from a future perspective as well as proceed responsively.

Secondly, in order to successfully prevent violence in schools and develop countermeasures, a structure for collaboration between diverse players must be established. The complexity of social issues makes it difficult in various cases to find the right match of experience in order to set the policy agenda and to find government staff who are well versed in all aspects of policy issues, which makes it necessary to give full play to the crucial role of experts as well as academics in setting the policy agenda. In the entire process of setting the policy agenda, experts and scholars could suggest constructive alternatives for the governance of the issue based on their professional knowledge and promote the setting of the policy agenda.

Thirdly, the policy's long-term viability should be considered. Our society has been in the ongoing development process and the social environment has changed throughout the previous decades of transformation and liberalization. We must realize that it is not realistic to set a policy agenda that attempts to solve major social problems in one step, but rather to break down the target problem in a step-by-step manner as per the current social situation, as well as address the target problem in a targeted manner as per the current social situation at each stage.

Fourth, the study's findings reveal that people's concerns have led to the escalation of societal issues. As members of society, we must be aware that the bullying incidents, which make headlines, have become special cases because of their seriousness, but it is the lesser-known incidents of school violence that must be brought to our attention. These little incidents in the corners of the school are often a huge crisis. It is unrealistic for policymakers to obtain the opinions of every citizen on an issue in real-time, but by using online media, policymakers may obtain as much information as possible about the general public's attitudes toward a particular issue.

Fifth, policymakers should pay heed to more actionable and professional perspectives at the same time. Experts and scholars have considerable authority in their fields of study, and some experts and scholars could foresee the pattern as well as the direction of things. They actively marketed their suggestions and opinions to officials when the situation was taken seriously by the government, which eventually became alternative solutions to school violence and contributed to the rapid introduction of the policy. As a result,

valuing the views of experts and academics starts with providing them with a platform where they can exchange their views face-to-face with groups of policymakers.

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