



Research Frontiers in Campus Bullying Interventions in China (2010-2024): A Bibliometric Investigation

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Abstract

School bullying has emerged as a pervasive global issue with profound impacts on adolescent mental health and social development. Utilizing CiteSpace-based bibliometric analysis, this study systematically examines 449 peer-reviewed articles on school bullying published in China (2010-2024). Key findings include: 1) An upward trajectory in publication output, with significant growth post-2017; 2) Identified research hotspots through co-occurrence analysis, with “school climate” and “bullying prevention” as dominant themes; 3) A temporal shift in focus from legal frameworks to victim-centered interventions. The study underscores the need for cross-disciplinary approaches to develop evidence-based anti-bullying strategies in educational settings.

Subject Areas

Law, Psychology

Keywords

School Bullying, Bibliometric Analysis, Adolescent Mental Health, Prevention Strategies, China

1. Introduction

Adolescent mental health has become a critical global concern, with school bullying recognized as a major contributing factor due to its severe psychological and academic consequences. Bullying manifests in various forms, including physical, verbal, and increasingly prevalent cyberbullying. Recent data indicate that approximately 30% of Chinese adolescents experience mental health challenges, with

25% directly linked to bullying incidents (China Adolescent Mental Health Report). Globally, the WHO estimates that one-third of students encounter bullying during their schooling.

In response, China implemented key policies like the 2016 Specialized Governance of School Bullying initiative and subsequent prevention guidelines. However, bullying persists due to its complex nature, inadequate prevention frameworks, and evolving societal factors. While existing research has advanced understanding, inconsistencies remain regarding underlying mechanisms and optimal interventions.

Despite research advances, school bullying's complexity and multidimensional effects remain underexplored, with inconsistent findings underscoring the need to better understand its mechanisms and interventions [1]. This study utilizes CiteSpace to analyze Chinese school bullying literature (2010-2024), mapping research evolution, identifying psychological roots, and evaluating prevention strategies. The findings provide both theoretical insights and practical guidance for creating safer school environments.

2. Data Sources and Research Methodology

2.1. Data Sources

This study extracted literature from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database using the search string: ((school bullying OR campus bullying) AND (countermeasure analysis OR mental health OR legal education) AND (primary/secondary schools OR minors)). The search covered publications from 2010 to 2024 (data retrieved October 17, 2024), yielding 543 initial results. After excluding 8 conference papers—which typically lack full peer-review and thus may not meet the requisite level of academic rigor—as well as film-related articles, 449 relevant peer-reviewed journal articles were retained as the final dataset in RefWorks-text format.

The search strategy employed three key term categories: “school bullying” and “campus bullying” as core concepts, “countermeasure analysis” for practical solutions, and “primary/secondary schools” or “minors” to target the most affected age groups. The inclusion of “mental health” addressed psychological impacts like anxiety and depression, while “legal education” terms helped identify preventive approaches through enhanced legal awareness. This comprehensive approach ensured both conceptual precision and practical relevance to school bullying interventions. As the most authoritative database for Chinese academic publications, CNKI was selected as the sole source. This single-source approach may introduce selection bias by omitting studies from other Chinese (e.g., Wanfang, VIP) or international databases.

2.2. Research Methodology

This study employs CiteSpace visualization software to conduct bibliometric and content analyses of domestic school bullying research, focusing on annual publication

trends and keyword patterns. The bibliometric approach quantitatively examines publication volumes and citation networks to identify developmental trajectories and research hotspots, providing empirical evidence for understanding the field's evolution. Complementarily, content analysis systematically evaluates textual data to extract thematic patterns, sentiment orientations, and underlying trends, enabling deeper interpretation of the scholarly discourse. The content-analysis coding scheme was developed inductively from the literature, focusing on three dimensions: research theme (e.g., definition, intervention, mental health), study population (e.g., primary students, adolescents), and research methodology (e.g., empirical, review). To ensure reliability, two researchers independently coded a random sample of 50 articles. The inter-rater reliability, calculated using Cohen's kappa, was 0.86, indicating a high level of agreement. These dual methodologies offer both macroscopic developmental insights and microscopic content-specific findings, collectively establishing a comprehensive analytical framework for school bullying research.

3. Definition of Campus Bullying

3.1. Core Concept of Campus Bullying

Campus bullying (school bullying), an English translation of the Western term "bullying", was first systematically studied by Norwegian scholar Olweus in the 1970s. He defined it as repeated and long-term negative actions by one or more students against a specific student or group. Olweus identified three core elements: intentional harm, repetitiveness, and unequal power dynamics [2].

3.2. Classification of Campus Bullying

Bullying is categorized into direct and indirect types. Direct bullying includes physical aggression (e.g., hitting, kicking, extortion) and verbal aggression (e.g., insults, mocking). Indirect bullying involves third parties, such as spreading rumors or social exclusion. Ren noted that school violence has a broader scope than bullying: it may involve external actors and non-repetitive acts, while psychological abuse (e.g., name-calling, exclusion) falls under bullying [3]. Confusions between "campus bullying" and "campus violence" exist in academia, as observed in this study's cross-age surveys. Campus bullying is characterized by fixed targets, repetitive behavior, diverse methods, and physical/psychological harm, including physical, verbal, sexual, relational, and cyberbullying.

3.3. Intervention Approaches for Campus Bullying

As a multidimensional issue requiring multi-level solutions, campus bullying has inspired various intervention measures in domestic and international research. Based on comprehensive studies, these can be broadly categorized as follows:

Peer Guidance

Peer influence plays a critical role in campus bullying intervention, as peer relationships are central to adolescents' psychosocial development. Poor peer relationships

can trigger negative emotions in adolescents, leading to problematic behaviors such as bullying [4]. Guided by social learning theory and peer influence theory in psychology, interventions can be implemented at different levels by encouraging students to mimic positive peer behaviors, enhancing bystanders' proactive engagement, and leveraging peer social status and influence.

Policy Development

As a severe challenge to students' physical-mental health and learning environments, campus bullying requires research and discussion from a legal regulatory perspective. Legislative and policy measures can effectively address bullying, providing students with safer and healthier educational settings [5] [6].

Psychological Intervention

Psychological interventions aim to improve individuals' mental states and behavioral patterns, enhancing students' ability to cope with and recover from bullying. Positive psychology not only focuses on mental health issues but also emphasizes cultivating individuals' internal strengths and positive qualities. By fostering optimism, hope, self-esteem, and other positive mindsets, individuals are more likely to mitigate the negative impacts of campus bullying [7].

4. Analysis of Data Underlying the Literature

4.1. Analysis of Annual Volume of Publications

The annual publication volume, represented by node size in the visualization, illustrates the evolving research interest in a specific field over time. All Chinese keywords in the figures have been translated and explained correspondingly in the text to facilitate understanding. As illustrated in **Figure 1**, the number of publications exhibited an upward fluctuation from 2010 to 2017, reaching a zenith of 68 articles in 2017. Despite a subsequent minor decline, the overarching trend remained ascendant. Based on the characteristics of the chart, the developmental trajectory can be categorized into three distinct phases:

Phase 1 (2010-2017): Characterized by 131 publications (constituting 29.2% of the total), this period marked the nascent stage of domestic research on campus bullying, predominantly concentrating on causal factors and sociological examinations. Limited policy guidance and a superficial comprehension of bullying phenomena were hallmarks of this era.

Phase 2 (2018-2022): During this phase, 239 publications (53.2% of the total) were documented, with growth patterns exhibiting fluctuations and notable peaks of 68 articles in 2017 and 2019. A significant inflection point occurred in 2016 with the issuance of the Guidelines on Preventing Bullying and Violence among Primary and Secondary Students by China's Ministry of Education and eight affiliated departments. This national policy milestone substantially escalated the prioritization of campus bullying issues. Concurrently, the expedited dissemination of bullying incidents through social media platforms triggered extensive public deliberations, thereby fueling academic engagement and incentivizing scholars to pursue targeted resolutions.

Phase 3 (2020-2024): With 79 publications (accounting for 17.6% of the total), the research domain entered a period of gradual growth. The heightened focus on campus bullying studies has propelled the field towards more profound and meticulous investigations, signifying a transition from the initial rapid expansion phase.

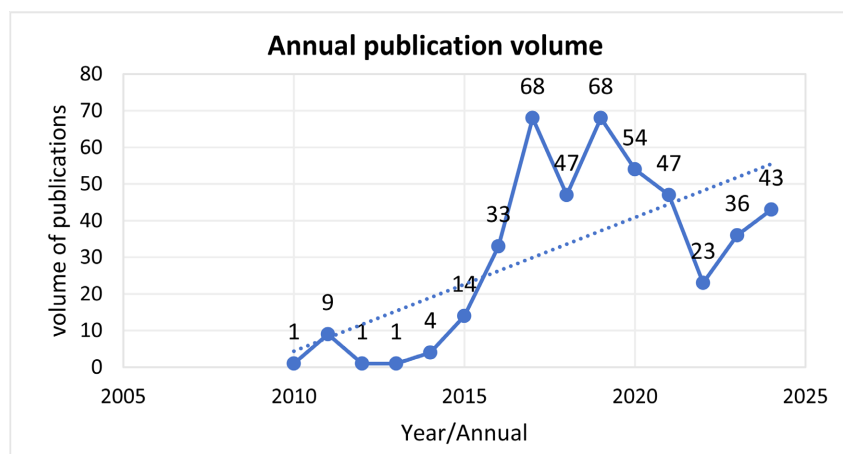


Figure 1. Distribution of the number of published literature and years.

4.2. Keyword Co-Occurrence and Cluster Analysis

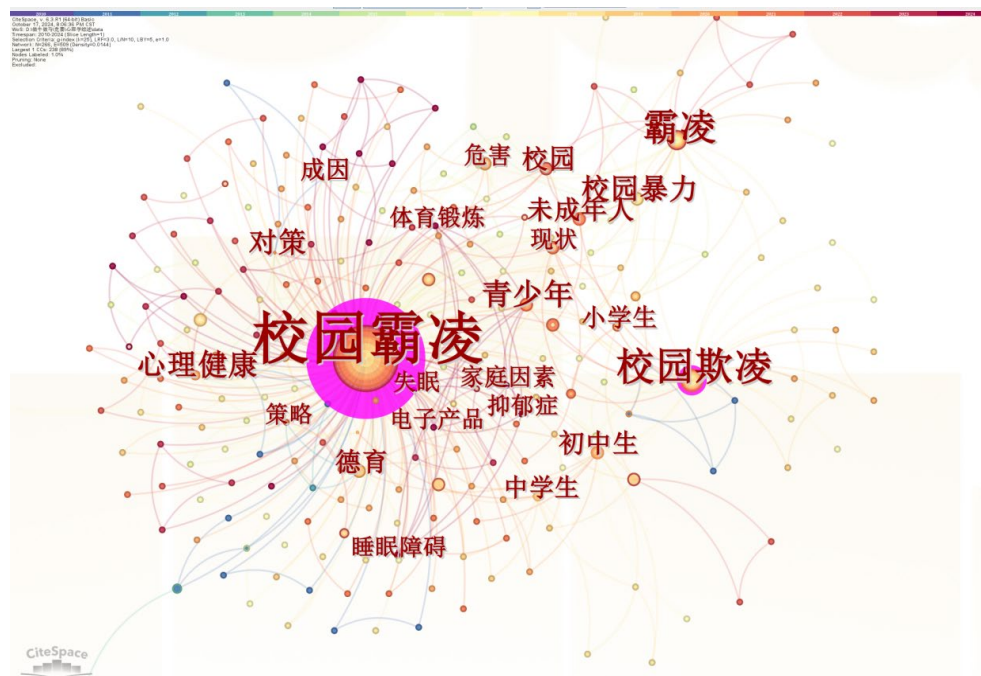
Keywords encapsulate the essence of literature, and their frequency reflects research trends in a field. Using CiteSpace, this study extracted hot keywords from 449 publications to generate a co-occurrence network map of domestic research hotspots on campus bullying, visually depicting the field's knowledge landscape [8].

As shown in **Figure 2**, nodes ($N = 266$) represent keywords, with circle size indicating frequency: larger circles signify higher occurrence. Edges ($E = 509$) denote co-occurrence, shaded by time. "Campus bullying", "campus violence", "mental health", "bullying", and "countermeasures" emerged as high-impact terms. "Campus bullying", "campus violence", and "bullying" show dense connections with each other and other nodes.

Setting $k = 25$ generated the cluster map in **Figure 3** (Modularity $Q = 0.5889$, Silhouette $S = 0.9404$), indicating significant and reliable clustering. Nine clusters emerged, with smaller numbers containing more keywords. Core themes include "campus bullying", "legal supervision", "countermeasures", "bullying", "middle school students", "adolescents", "current status", "harm", and "parenting styles". Dense nodes and edges within clusters form interconnected knowledge networks.

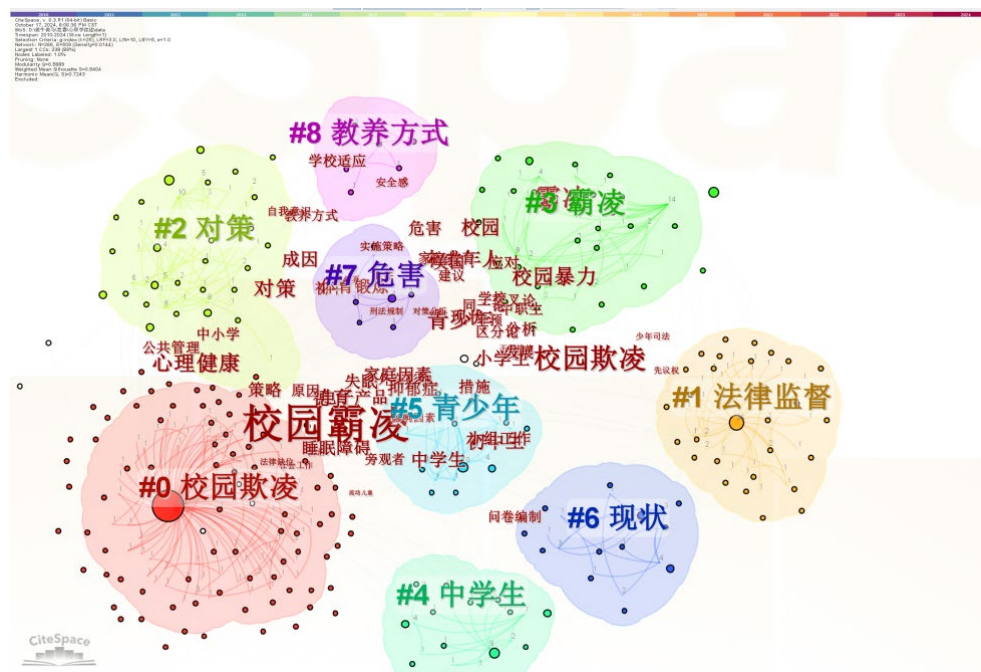
4.3. Research Hotspot Themes

Analyzing the high-frequency keywords and cluster details in **Table 1** reveals the core content of domestic campus bullying research over the past two decades. Despite conceptual overlaps, the themes can be synthesized into three main categories:



Note: Key Chinese keywords and their English equivalents are as follows: 校园欺凌(School Bullying); 校园暴力(School Violence); 心理健康(Mental Health); 对策(Countermeasures); 中学生(Middle School Students); 青少年(Adolescents); 未成年人(Minors); 道德教育(Moral Education); 家庭教育(Parenting Style); 校园安全(Campus Safety).

Figure 2. Keyword co-occurrence network map.



Note: The cluster labels in Chinese are translated as: #0 校园欺凌(School Bullying); #1 法律监督(Legal Supervision); #2 对策(Countermeasures); #3 欺凌(Bullying); #4 中学生(Middle School Students); #5 青少年(Adolescents); #6 现状(Current Situation); #7 危害(Harm); #8 家庭教育(Parenting Style).

Figure 3. Keyword co-occurrence clustering map.

Table 1. High-frequency keywords.

Serial Number	Frequency	Year	Keyword
1	163	2011	School Bullying
2	25	2016	School-based Bullying
3	14	2016	Bullying
4	10	2015	School Violence
5	10	2016	Adolescents
6	10	2015	Mental Health
7	9	2017	Junior
8	8	2017	Minors
9	8	2011	Countermeasures
10	8	2012	Moral Education

1) Phenomenon Definition and Subject Population

Sun and Liu highlighted that the repetitive nature, diverse methods, and fixed targets of campus bullying cause severe physical and psychological harm to adolescents, potentially leading to suicidal behavior [9]. Such bullying distorts the essence of school education, threatens campus safety, and both bullies and victims may exhibit violent tendencies harmful to societal security. Ren distinguished “campus bullying” from “campus violence” in his conceptual definition, emphasizing that conflating the two hinders effective governance [3]. Narrowly defined, campus bullying excludes external intrusions and teacher victimization, focusing primarily on adolescent populations. Studies indicate that bullies often display deviant traits: lack of self-control, irresponsibility, impulsivity, low frustration tolerance, egocentrism, and strained peer relationships [10]. Li and Wei proposed targeted prevention measures across four dimensions: perpetrator intervention, potential victim protection, situational control, and legal regulation [11].

2) Impacts and Current Status Analysis

The effects of campus bullying extend beyond psychological harm to bullies, victims, and bystanders. Sun and Liu warned that psychologically distorted individuals in these roles may escalate into societal threats, undermining campus safety [9]. Frequent media exposure of bullying cases and online dissemination have intensified research salience in China, with academia increasingly prioritizing the issue. However, the rising frequency of severe bullying incidents—characterized by younger perpetrators, group aggression, and covert behaviors—presents unprecedented challenges for prevention [1].

3) Intervention Strategies

Domestic prevention efforts primarily focus on government policy formulation, educational research enhancement, and school-family collaboration to build anti-bullying networks, often from a legal-regulatory perspective. A notable case is Taiwan region’s context-specific framework, featuring distinct approaches in prevention,

intervention, and healing. Key measures include cultivating anti-bullying cultures, enhancing teachers' professional competence, developing targeted curricula, and narrative-based victim rehabilitation. This has formed a three-tier prevention system: foundational prevention, intervention mechanisms, and post-crisis healing [12].

5. Analysis of Research Trends

Keyword burst detection is a widely used method in bibliometric analysis, employed to identify prominent keywords that exhibit significant activity during specific time periods. By analyzing the frequency and intensity of these bursts, researchers can discern developmental trends and shifts within a research field. Utilizing CiteSpace, a burst analysis was conducted on the retrieved literature, resulting in the keyword burst strength visualization presented below.

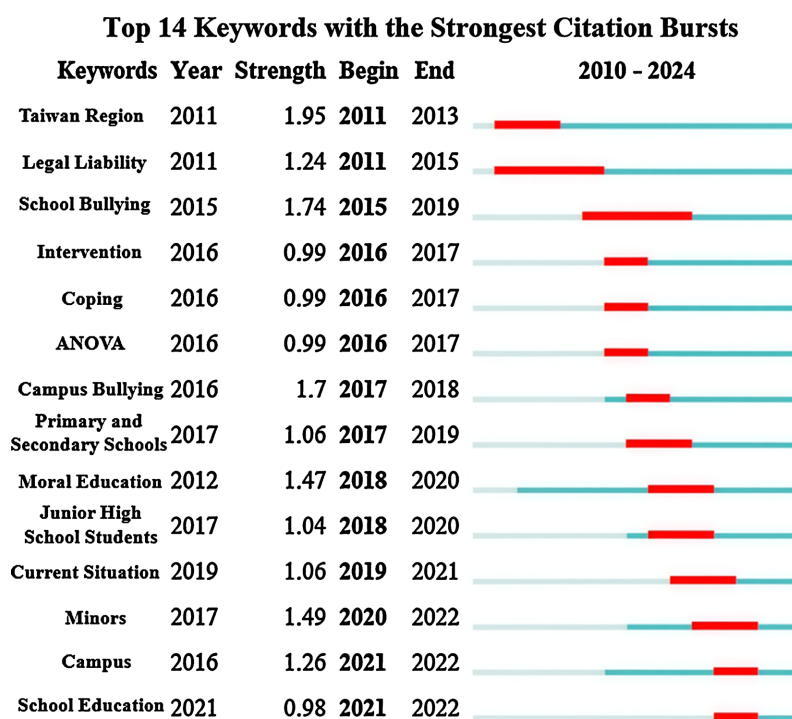


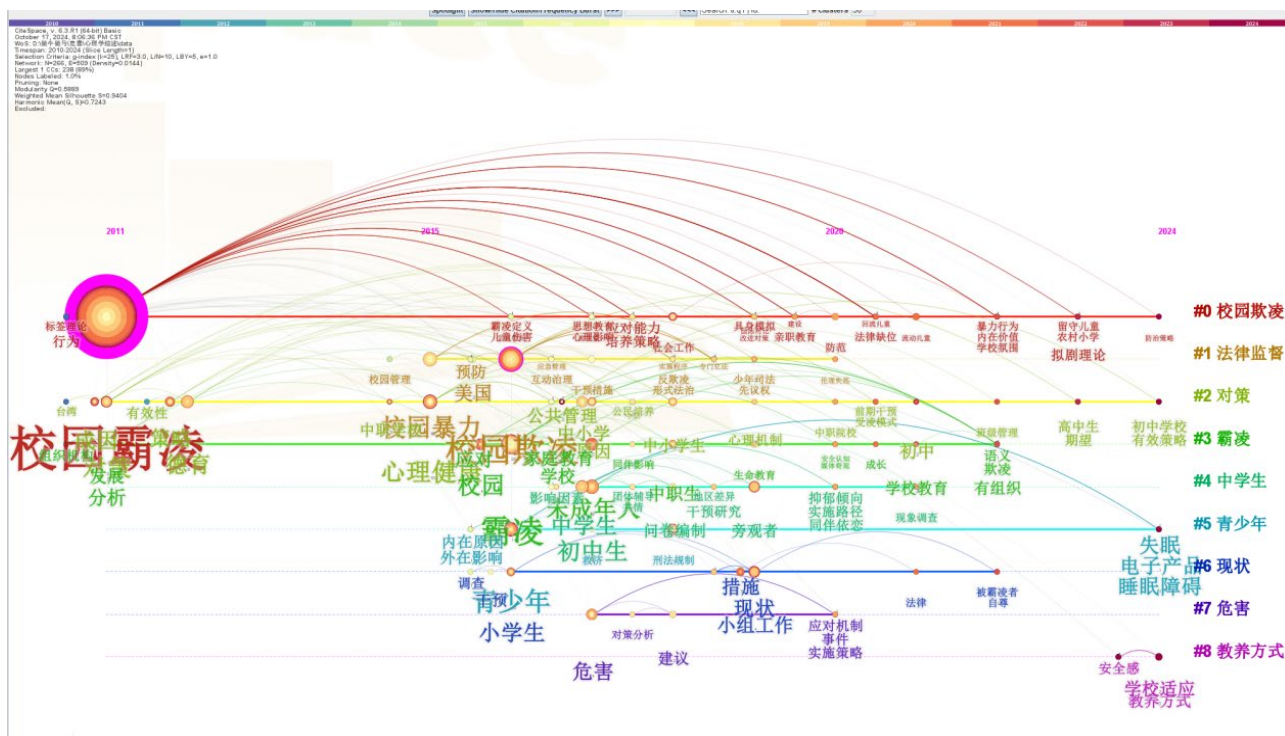
Figure 4. Keyword burst strength visualization chart.

As indicated in **Figure 4**, “Taiwan region” and “legal liability” have been established as early and persistent research hotspots. This phenomenon is attributable to the annual escalation of “violent incidents and deviant behaviors” on campuses in Taiwan region between 2011 and 2013, involving egregious acts such as physical assaults, humiliation, threats, and even life-threatening injuries like neck lacerations. These extreme cases triggered substantial societal backlash and public demands for legal accountability. The sustained media attention in Taiwan region—characterized by detailed reporting and follow-up coverage of bullying incidents—coupled with growing public awareness, has systematically advanced

legal refinements and prioritization by educational authorities.

In contrast to the prolonged focus on “campus bullying”, research themes such as “intervention”, “policy responses”, and “variance analysis” exhibited shorter temporal spans. Recent research has increasingly converged on demographics (e.g., “junior high school students”, “minors”) and settings (e.g., “campus”, “school education”), reflecting a methodological shift in China’s campus bullying scholarship from theoretical discourse to empirically grounded, school-centric applications (as shown in Figure 5).

While these findings illuminate evolving research trends, they must be interpreted in light of this study’s limitations. The bibliometric analysis is inherently descriptive, and the reliance on CNKI as a single data source may have resulted in the omission of relevant studies from other databases or in languages other than Chinese.



Note: The cluster labels in Chinese are translated as: #0 校园欺凌(School Bullying); #1 法律监管(Legal Supervision); #2 对策 (Countermeasures); #3 欺凌(Bullying); #4 中学生(Middle School Students); #5 青少年(Adolescents).

Figure 5. Keyword timeline.

6. Implications and Future Directions

Based on CiteSpace knowledge graph analysis, this study systematically reviewed the research hotspots and evolutionary trends in domestic campus bullying studies from 2010 to 2024. Results show that the research primarily focuses on five themes: “campus environment”, “student psychology”, “legal regulation”, “educational guidance”, and “school-family collaboration”. Developmentally, the field has demonstrated stage-specific growth, progressing toward establishing a sound

prevention system, safeguarding student physical and mental health, and implementing safe campus initiatives.

These analytical findings yield direct, actionable implications for educational practice and policy. This study specifically proposes that: For schools, developing and implementing evidence-based anti-bullying programs that integrate socio-emotional learning into the daily curriculum is critical to improving students' conflict-resolution skills and emotional resilience. Furthermore, establishing clear and confidential reporting mechanisms, coupled with proactive bystander intervention training, can empower the entire student body to become part of the solution. For policymakers, it is imperative to translate research into actionable policy by mandating the development of standardized, nationwide protocols for bullying incident reporting, investigation, and follow-up psychological support, ensuring a consistent and timely response across all educational institutions.

Notwithstanding significant achievements, multiple directions warrant further exploration. Regarding campus environments, continuous optimization of physical and humanistic settings is recommended to ensure safe and comfortable facilities while fostering a positive and harmonious campus culture. In student psychology, research on age- and personality-specific psychological responses and coping mechanisms in bullying contexts should be strengthened, alongside the provision of targeted psychological counseling. For legal regulation, relevant authorities are urged to refine laws to clarify bullying definitions, punishment mechanisms, and enforcement procedures, thereby enhancing legal deterrence and protective functions. In educational guidance, innovating anti-bullying education content and integrating it into daily teaching can help cultivate students' correct values and enhance their self-protection and resistance capabilities.

CiteSpace visualization further reveals current limitations, such as insufficient exploration of bullying's deep psychological and social mechanisms, scarce research on regional disparities, and a lack of empirical support for systematic tracking of long-term impacts. Accordingly, future research should expand in the following areas:

- 1) Thematic Deepening: Investigate the psychosocial mechanisms of bullying, regional differences within sociocultural contexts, and the multidimensional long-term effects of bullying on individual student development.

- 2) Methodological Innovation: Increase the proportion of quantitative research, combine it with in-depth qualitative analysis, and adopt multidisciplinary collaboration (e.g., psychology, sociology, and education) to broaden research perspectives and methodological foundations.

- 3) Policy and Practice Translation: Promote the transformation of research outcomes into educational policies and practices, facilitating the application of anti-bullying measures in school management, teaching, and psychological counseling.

- 4) Emerging Fields Exploration: Evaluate the effectiveness of existing interventions, explore the potential applications of new technologies (e.g., artificial intelligence and

big data analysis) in bullying identification and intervention, and strengthen international comparative studies to draw on successful experiences from other countries [13].

To comprehensively improve bullying prevention and control, a systematic and collaborative comprehensive prevention system is essential. This system should integrate the efforts of governments, schools, families, and society to achieve benign interaction through improved institutional safeguards, deepened educational guidance, robust management and supervision, and positive public discourse. Through multi-faceted expansion and in-depth research, a safe and harmonious campus environment can be created for students, driving the sustained development of campus bullying prevention and control initiatives.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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