

# A Child's Reflection: Why Are Students Turning Violent?

Jessie Lee

Member, Children's Consultative Council 2025-2027, Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)

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Recent weeks have brought deeply troubling news. On 16 October 2025, Malaysia was shaken by two horrifying incidents involving students — a group of Form 5 boys accused of raping a Form 3 girl, and a case where a Form 2 student fatally stabbed a Form 4 student. As a teenager myself, I find these events heartbreaking. They make me wonder — what is happening to our children, our schools, and our society?

These are not isolated acts of violence. They reflect deeper cracks in our social system — in the ways families nurture, schools educate, and communities protect young people. As someone growing up in this environment, I believe it's time we listen to what children see and feel about these issues.

## *Weak Protection Systems*

Malaysia has laws like the Child Act 2001 that are meant to protect us, yet their enforcement often falls short. Teachers and adults frequently notice early warning signs — bullying, aggression, withdrawal — but action only comes when it's too late. Many schools lack counsellors, and those who exist are often overwhelmed or undertrained to handle at-risk youth. Mental health support remains limited, and too often, children in distress have no safe place to turn to.

## *Family and Parenting Issues*

Many problems begin at home. Economic pressures and long working hours leave parents with little time or emotional energy to connect with their children. Some rely on shouting or hitting to discipline, thinking it builds obedience. But when violence becomes normal at home, children learn that aggression is acceptable.

If parents never talk about empathy, respect, and consent, how can their children understand those values when they face real-life situations that demand them?

## *Schools and the Decline of Moral Education*

In the recent rape case, the accused students were reportedly allowed to sit for their SPM exams, sparking public outrage. It raises an important question: have our schools become too focused on grades instead of character?

Subjects like Moral Education or Pendidikan Islam are often memorised for exams rather than lived as values. Teachers, pressured by academic results, may overlook emotional growth and ethical guidance. This sends a dangerous message — that intelligence and success can excuse cruelty.

### *The Influence of Social Media*

Social media platforms have become powerful teachers — but not always in good ways. Online spaces often glorify violence, misogyny, and hypersexualised behaviour. Influencers promote dominance and disrespect as “confidence,” and young people start to imitate them. Without digital literacy or adult guidance, we absorb these distorted values and act on them, unaware of the harm we cause.

### *Peer Pressure and Mental Health*

Peer influence is another strong factor. Many of us want to appear “tough” or “cool,” even if it means crossing boundaries. Yet, mental health — though often talked about — is rarely treated seriously in schools. Students who seek help sometimes find their privacy violated or their struggles dismissed.

When teens carry stress, trauma, or insecurity without proper support, they may act out through anger or rebellion. They are not bad kids — just children who were never taught how to express emotions safely.

### *The Role of Misogyny and Sexism*

From the rape case, it’s impossible to ignore how misogyny and toxic masculinity play a role. Boys are often taught to be “strong” and “in control,” but not to be kind or empathetic. They grow up thinking dominance equals respect. But true strength comes from self-control and compassion — not power over others.

Media and pop culture reinforce these gender stereotypes by sexualising women and portraying aggression as masculine. Online spaces make it worse, with influencers preaching that “real men don’t take no for an answer.” These attitudes breed entitlement and strip away empathy — the foundation of any humane society.

Even within families, sexism persists. Some parents excuse boys’ misbehaviour while expecting girls to be quiet and obedient. When victims are told to stay silent to “protect the family’s reputation,” it teaches all the wrong lessons — that shame belongs to victims, not perpetrators.

### *What These Incidents Say About Us*

I don't believe Malaysia's youth are simply becoming violent. I believe society has forgotten how to teach empathy. Families, schools, the government, and young people themselves — all of us share responsibility.

We live in a world where social media shapes our values more than parents or teachers do. Where discipline is feared, not respected. And where masculinity is confused with aggression instead of integrity.

If we don't start addressing these issues — especially how boys are taught to treat girls — we will keep seeing these tragedies repeat. It's not enough to punish offenders; we must understand what created them in the first place.

### *Moving Forward*

Change begins with awareness. Schools must teach empathy and respect with the same seriousness as science or mathematics. Parents should discuss consent, emotions, and online behaviour openly, not just punish mistakes. The government and media must also take stronger action against harmful digital content and gender stereotypes.

But the biggest change must come from us — the young generation. We need to question what we see online, speak up against injustice, and stop normalising toxicity. Because if we stay silent, we allow the same cycle to continue.

Violence and misogyny are not just "adult problems." They are warning signs — that we, as a society, must do better to protect our children and safeguard their future.