

Outcry in China after police refuse to pursue father allegedly abusing child on train

Monday 5 November 2018, by [KUO Lily](#) (Date first published: 1 November 2018).

A video taken on a train in southern China allegedly showed a man fondling a five-year-old girl, sparking outrage

There has been outrage in China after police dropped the investigation of a case involving a father allegedly molesting his five-year-old daughter on a train in southeastern [China](#), because the alleged offender was related to the girl.

A video circulating online last week showed a man repeatedly fondling a young girl who addressed him as her father and asked him to stop. The footage, taken from a train in Jiangxi province led to outcry on social media, prompting authorities to investigate.

On Wednesday, the Nanchang railway police reported that it had located the man in the video, a 30-year-old man by the surname Zhou, who had taken the train with his daughter.

Noting the man's familial relationship to the girl, the police said: "Zhou's behaviour shown in the video does not constitute molesting. We sincerely thank citizens for their concern," the post read.

The response prompted outrage from people who said the man's conduct, which involved him touching the girl who was seated on his lap under her clothes, was clearly sexual.

China's first national domestic violence law, implemented in March 2016, includes protections for children and mandatory reporting of cases of abuse against children. In the country's criminal code, molesting children is a crime punishable by a minimum of up to five years in prison.

Yet because domestic abuse has long been seen as an issue families should settle internally, many cases go ignored by local police.

"There are relevant laws about child sexual abuse, but in terms of prevention and protection of children, there is not enough clear regulation," said Feng Yuan, an expert on domestic abuse in China.

The Nanchang [police statement](#), posted on Weibo, has received more than 20,000 comments, most of them angry responses from citizens who interpreted the police's statement to mean that their familial ties barred the possibility of sexual abuse.

One user said: "This is not molestation because they are father and daughter? Are you officially telling me that a father can molest or rape his daughter?" One wrote: "This report is more disgusting than the video." "You police are sick," another said.

In September, a video circulated online of a man attacking a woman on a bus in Guangxi province.

After police determined the man was the woman's long-time partner and father of her child, he was released after five days of detention.

Observers say patriarchal ideals that are still dominant within families also pose a problem. "Parents, especially male parents, see their children as an object they can control" said Ai Xiaoming, a rights activist and women's issues scholar.

"If a parent sees their child as an object, it's hard for that parent to know what the appropriate boundary is in communicating and interacting with their kids. The father in the video may not even understand that his behaviour is inappropriate," she said.

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