

Commuters behaving badly on public transportation



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Spit & spat

It begins with the boy throwing a tantrum on the floor of an MRT train, screaming as he swings his hands and kicks his bare feet in the air.

It ends with the boy, who looks to be of kindergarten age, walking up to a male passenger sitting on the floor and spitting at him.

This public display of bad behaviour, which happened on the North-South Line between 11am to noon on Tuesday, was captured on video by another commuter, Mr Alvan Khong, 29, who later sent it to citizen journalism website Stomp.

Mr Khong, who works in IT, told The New Paper yesterday that he had boarded the train at Woodlands Station to Jurong East Station that day.

Between Kranji and Yew Tee stations, he noticed that the boy, who was accompanied by a middle-aged woman, had suddenly become agitated.

When he started throwing his things around, including his books, schoolbag, water bottle and shoes, Mr Khong took out his camera phone to film the disturbance.

His tantrum went on for about two minutes before he went back, still screaming, to the woman who was seated.

After a while, the boy walked towards a male passenger, who looked to be in his teens and was sitting on the floor in one corner.

The boy then shocked other commuters by spitting on the teenager before walking back to the woman.

The woman finally stood up and grabbed the boy's arms and looked to be reprimanding him.

Later, she is seen smacking the boy at least twice.

Mr Khong said: "She was trying to ignore the child as a method of discouraging his actions. It obviously did not work."

The teenager did not react to the spit, apart from wiping it away from his thigh a few seconds later.

The woman then walked towards the teenager but it is unclear from the video what transpired between them.

When she returned to tend to the boy, the teenager collected the boy's belongings from the floor.

It could not be ascertained if he is related to the woman and the boy and if the woman is the boy's mother.

Mr Khong said: "Even if the woman is not his mother, as a caretaker, she should have taken more action to discipline the child."

BOUNDARIES

Civil servant Lim Zhi Yang, 36, who has twin boys who will both turn four this year, said: "It is a wrong assumption that children cannot keep to boundaries that you set them.

"Before I board public transport with my children, I set clear boundaries about what they can and cannot do and they keep to it."

Ms Afsah Misran, 30, a civil servant and a mother of two children aged two and four, said: "Children are naturally curious and they can get distracted easily in public. If the parent does not teach them well, it is not surprising that they will misbehave."

Mr Lim agreed, saying that children at this age do not know better and it is up to their parents to teach them.

Dr Carol Balhetchet, senior director for youth services at the Singapore Children's Society, said: "Children act based on personal emotions, rather than on social situations. They tend not to differentiate between public and private spaces and mainly consider their emotions only."

She agreed that parents must set clear standards with their children. And when things get out of hand, the best way to solve them is to take them out of the public eye to take care of them.

Singapore Kindness Movement general secretary, Dr William Wan, said that bad behaviour on public transport would affect other commuters.

"We are encouraging parents to be good role models and reinforce values taught in school. But few, if any, of us are 'trained' for parenthood and many struggle even with their best efforts," he said.

Man scolds woman for insulting driver

When he heard a woman allegedly insulting a driver in a public bus on Sunday evening, a passenger sprang to the driver's defence.

It sparked an ugly scene that lasted several minutes as the two passengers hurled insults at each other, to the shock of others on the bus.

One of them filmed a six-minute video of the exchange and his friend, who wanted to be known only as R2, sent it to citizen journalism website Stomp with this description: "Outraged after allegedly hearing a female commuter call the bus driver stupid, a man went on a vulgar tirade and called her various names..."

"He refused to stop his furious rant even when another male commuter intervened and when the driver tried to separate the quarrelling duo."

In the video, the man can be heard shouting repeatedly, "He's not stupid, you're stupid!", interspersed with expletives.

Other commuters could be seen leaving the bus as the antagonists stood facing each other and trading insults.

When contacted, R2, 25, said his friend had told him that the man appeared to be drunk.

At one point, the woman laughed and said sarcastically that the man was very funny.

Even as she was alighting at Suntec City, the man continued his tirade.

Shop assistant X.M. Teo, 20, who saw the video, said: "Justified or not, the woman making such offensive remarks is asking for trouble."

HARSH

Mr Jack Tang, a 19-year-old who is waiting to enter university, disagreed: "I thought the man's comments were unnecessarily harsh towards the woman."

The Singapore Kindness Movement general secretary, Dr William Wan, said that while it is right to stand up against bad behaviour, people must not behave badly themselves.

Dr Carol Balhetchet of the Singapore Children's Society said: "As adults, we tend to control our emotions better.

"But sometimes, when we engage in reactive behaviour, there is an increased sense of urgency and we may tend to respond without thinking as a result."

Cases from last year

OCTOBER

An elderly woman was seen chasing and hitting a young boy repeatedly with an umbrella until the handle broke.

She did not stop even when the boy cried.

JULY

A driver stopped his Honda hatchback in front of an SBS bus at Toa Payoh Lorong 4.

He got out and angrily gestured to the bus driver to come down.

The police were called and both drivers were advised not to breach the peace.

APRIL

A man blocked a bus from leaving after being denied entry by the bus driver.

He was arrested after damaging the left rear view mirror of the bus and its windscreen wiper.

FEBRUARY

Two cases of commuters fighting over seats were reported.



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