

## Perceptions of sexual harassment among Vietnamese middle and high school students

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### Abstract

Sexual harassment awareness is defined in this article as a comprehension of sexual harassment, which includes identifying its manifestations, causes, repercussions, and hazards. In 2021, research on middle school and high school students' perceptions of sexual harassment will be conducted using a questionnaire survey method with 621 junior high and high school students in the inner and outer suburbs of three cities in Vietnam. The research findings indicate that students responding to the question most accurately identify physical sexual harassment, whereas some forms of verbal or non-verbal harassment can be misconstrued with teasing. Sanctions for sexual harassment are lax, the primary source of sexual harassment. According to students' understanding, public areas and public transportation are the locations most prone to sexual harassment, while strangers are the subjects most prone to perpetrate sexual harassment. Sexual harassment has a detrimental effect on students' physical, mental, and personal functioning. According to the T-Test results, male students perceive physical and mental repercussions, as well as penalties for personal activities, more vividly than female students. Middle school students outperform high school students in detecting prospective sexual offenders, but high school students outperform junior high school students in recognizing the physical repercussions of sexual harassment.

**Keywords:** Perceptions, sexual harassment, middle school students, high school students, Vietnam.

## Introduction

Jurists, psychologists, sociologists, epidemiologists, educators, and social workers have all contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of sexual harassment and its forms. Sexual harassment: Symptoms, Causes, Perpetrators, Prevention, and Intervention Sexual harassment has a detrimental effect on the victim's psychological well-being, career, and relationships. Sexual harassment can occur in any location, at any time, and is especially prevalent in public spaces. In Vietnam, 87% of women and girls have encountered at least one sort of public sexual harassment. Which female students are subjected to the most harassment? (60 percent ). 57% of women/girls believe that the most common settings for this behavior are public streets, buses, and bus terminals (Platzer, 2016).

According to a study conducted by Action Aid, International Plan groups in Vietnam, and the CGFED Center, up to 87 percent of women and children surveyed have ever encountered sexual harassment in a public setting (Harris, 1998).

Over the last few decades, research on sexual harassment has centered on the workplace (Fitzgerald et al., 1995). However, recent research have revealed that sexual harassment by classmates and peer groups at school is significantly more prevalent than workplace sexual harassment (Fineran & Gruber, 2008). According to one survey, up to 80% of high school students may have encountered at least one kind of sexual harassment during their time in school (L & Hyde, 2009).

Sexual harassment awareness is critical for prevention and response, and is one of the factors determining the prevalence of sexual harassment behaviors (Jahya, 2014). In actuality, however, the community's awareness of sexual harassment remains limited. Sexual harassment manifests itself verbally or nonverbally in a variety of ways. For example, delivering sexual jokes and making comments about the body are regarded acceptable workplace or school interactions. Comments about other people's physique are even regarded as amusing, and occasionally as compliments to one another (Ekore, 2012). Although 100% of the high school students who participated in the poll agreed that sexual harassment can take both implicit and explicit forms, only verbal/visual harassment acts. Children believe the images displayed to be sexual harassment (Terrance et al., 2004). Up to 80% of respondents

were unsure of the types of sexual harassment that could be considered (Fitzgerald & Shullman, 1993).

School sexual harassment becomes even more dangerous when many students are unaware that it is sexual harassment and hence fail to report it or take preventative measures. In terms of sexual harassment perceptions, Harned and Fitzgerald (2002) suggest that the majority of students view any sexual approach by teachers as unacceptable, including permitting teachers' students to approach for money, points, or to undertake activities in closed areas alone with professors. Harassment between professors and students through gestures, gaze, words, and actions is also not deemed suitable.

Browne (2006) also stated that a significant number of instances of sexual harassment go unreported. Along with reasons such as fear of being criticized for speaking out and fear of encountering negative situations while reporting, causes related to the perception of the person being sexually harassed are listed. Many victims of sexual harassment are unaware they are being harassed, and hence do not report it (Browne, 2006).

Numerous studies have demonstrated the implications of school sexual harassment, including increased rates of depression (Hatchel et al., 2018), anxiety (Nishina & Juvonen, 2005), and lower self-esteem (Nishina & Juvonen, 2005). Lindberg, (Grabe et al., 2007); academic achievement decline (Duffy et al., 2004); mental disturbances and behavioral or suicidal ideas (Bagley et al., 1997). In comparison to business sexual harassment, school sexual harassment is also more dangerous because it jeopardizes students' healthy personality development (Harned & Fitzgerald, 2002).

According to the findings of a previous study on students and students on street sexual harassment, the attackers were mostly strangers (Bowman, 1993). This is also pretty understandable, as strangers will not recognize them after they commit acts of harassment, victims will not have sufficient information about them to prosecute, and strangers will face no ethical dilemmas. The worry of society's bonds collapsing (such as family relationships, friends, relatives, ...)

The purpose of this article is to examine middle school and high school students' perceptions of sexual harassment across four domains: 1) identifying signs

of sexual harassment; 2) comprehending the causes of sexual harassment; 3) recognizing the consequences of sexual harassment; and 4) identifying sexual harassment risks.

## **Research Methods**

### **Study design**

This study used a quantitative design with a one-time cross-sectional survey method.

### **Study participant**

The study participants were middle school and high school students who volunteered to participate.

### **Study setting**

Three cities in Vietnam were selected as the study sites for the following reasons: 1) They are big cities; 2) Representing 3 regions of Vietnam (North, Central, and South); 3) Are hot spots for sexual harassment.

### **Sample size and sampling**

621 middle school and high school boys and girls are living in 3 cities in Vietnam by 2021 and meet 3 criteria: 1) are students in middle and high schools information, (2) from 12 to under 18 years of age, (3) voluntarily participating in the study. The intentional sampling method was used.

### **Measurements**

The main research tool is a self-answered questionnaire designed to understand the perceptions of middle and high school students on issues related to sexual harassment. Based on the results of U.S. sexual harassment studies. Merit Systems Protection Board (1981, 1988, 1995), (Timmerman & Bajema, 1998), Action Aid Foundation ; Labor Relations Committee - Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Vietnam General Confederation of Labor, Vietnam Chamber of Industry and Commerce (2015) Chan (2020); UN Women and Ho Chi Minh City Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, the part of identifying signs of sexual harassment

was mentioned in a questionnaire consisting of 24 symptoms. In which, 10 expressions are in the form of verbal sexual harassment, 5 are in the form of physical sexual harassment and 9 are in the form of non-verbal sexual harassment.

The part that assesses students' understanding of the manifestations, causes, and objects of sexual harassment is self-assessed on 5 levels: 1. Not true, 2. A little true, 3. Normal, 4. Much true, 5. True. Students rated high-risk areas for sexual harassment on five levels: 1. Never, 2. Very rarely, 3. Rarely, 4. Occasionally, 5. Frequently. This study considered the consequences of sexual harassment for middle school and high school students on three dimensions: physical effects, mental effects, and impact on activities individually and assessed by students on 5 levels: 1. Very little, 2. Little, 3. Normal, 4. Much, 5. Very much.

### **Data collection**

The investigators gathered survey data through individual interviews with middle and high school students. Before data collection, enumerators received training on the research objectives, interview techniques, and information to be collected. The investigator addressed students who volunteered to participate to screen for study eligibility at each study location. After screening, those eligible and willing to participate were informed about the study's objectives, content, participants' rights and interests, and potential risks associated with participation. Supervisors closely monitor the quality of data collected following and during each interview.

### **Data analysis and statistical method**

Collected data is processed by the SPSS program in the Window environment, version 22.0.

The parameters and statistical operations used in this study are descriptive statistical analysis and inferential statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics used mean score, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage to describe the perceived status of sexual harassment among middle and high school students. The inferential statistical analysis mainly uses the technique of comparing the mean (compare means) with the Independent-Samples T-Test. In the T-Test, the mean values are considered to be statistically different, with a probability of  $P < 0.05$ .

### Ethical considerations

The study is based on the informed consent principle, in which each middle school and high school student participating in an interview is fully informed about the research objectives, content, participants, and participants. Students are then asked for permission to collect and process data about them. Students invited to participate in an interview have the right to refuse to be interviewed, withdraw from the study, or refuse to answer one or more specific questions during the interview. The data collected from the study is strictly confidential. The first and last names of the interviewed students are not written on the questionnaire. The informed consent form, the list of students participating in the study, and their contact information are stored separately and securely, and there is a plan to destroy this information upon completion of the study.

## Results

### General characteristics of the study sample

There were 621 middle and high school students participating in the study. The characteristics of the survey participants are shown in Table 1. Specifically, nearly half of the students are male (49.4%, n = 307), living in suburban areas (47.2%, n = 293) and high school students (48.5%, n = 301), more than half of the students are female (50.6%, n = 314), living in the inner city (52.8%, n = 328) and is a middle school student (51.5%, n = 320).

Table 1: General characteristics of the study caregivers

	Factor	Value
N (%)		621 (100,0)
Gender	Male, n (%)	307(49.4)
	Female, n (%)	314(50.6)
School-level	Middle School, n (%)	320 (51.5)
	High school, n (%)	301(48.5)
Living area	Inner-city, n (%)	328(52.8)
	Suburban, n (%)	293(47.2)

(Source: The survey data of the study)

## Main findings

### 1. Identify the signs of sexual harassment

Chart 1 shows the level of recognition of middle and high school students about manifestations of sexual harassment. The results show that the physical signs of sexual harassment are best recognized by the students ( $M = 3.77$ ), followed by the non-verbal signs of sexual harassment ( $M = 3.57$ ), and third are nonverbal manifestations of sexual harassment ( $M = 3.48$ ).

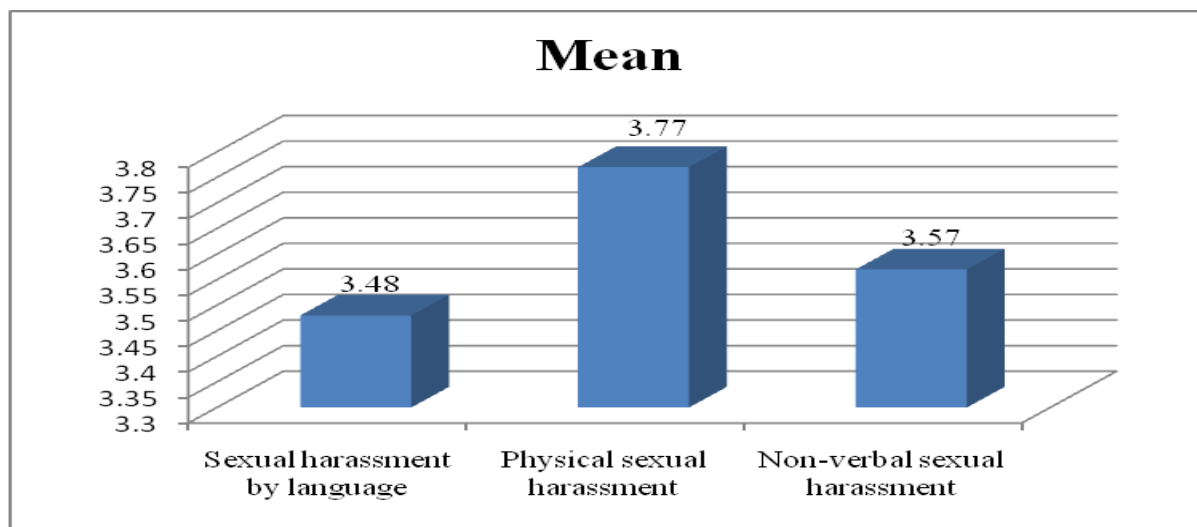


Chart 1: Degree of recognition of manifestations in forms of sexual harassment among middle and high school students

(Source: The survey data of the study)

More than half of middle school and high school students participating in the study confirmed that manifestations of sexual harassment are physical, measurable, and easily observable. These are the expressions "Forcing to touch/touch another person's genitals" (61.2%); "Others exposed the genitals" (56.0%); "Required to view or submit nude images" (54.9%); "Having been shown or sent nude images by others" (53.1%); "Receiving sexually suggestive and sexual images/video clips via phone or computer" (53.1%); "Forced to view pornographic pictures/videos" (50.9%).

Verbal expressions or non-verbal gestures can be confused with the form of teasing or flirting. The expressions that few middle and high school students identify as sexual harassment are expressions such as "Glances, winks at each other" (14.8%), "Being whistled and teased" (18.8%), "Getting sexually offensive comments" (21.7%), "Listening to obscene jokes about sex" (25.4%).

Table 2: Results of identifying signs of sexual harassment of middle and high school students

Manifestations of forms of sexual harassment		Incorrect	Right a little	Normal	Much true	It's correct
Language sexual harassment	1. Being rudely commented on about appearance or body parts n (%)	145 (23.3)	45 (7.2)	140 (22.5)	127 (20.5)	164 (26.4)
	2. Offered/suggested sex n (%)	109 (17.6)	21 (3.4)	58 (9.3)	129 (20.8)	304 (49.0)
	3. Being teased n (%)	109 (17.6)	27 (4.3)	103 (16.6)	138 (22.2)	244 (39.3)
	4. Unwanted meeting/ dating requests/requests n (%)	114 (18.4)	44 (7.1)	205 (33.0)	93 (15.0)	165 (26.6)
	5. Asked questions about sex n (%)	106 (17.1)	36 (5.8)	120 (19.3)	139 (22.4)	220 (35.4)
	6. Comments about gender n (%)	139 (22.4)	79 (12.7)	139 (22.4)	129 (20.8)	135 (21.7)
	7. Being told obscene sexual jokes n (%)	108 (17.4)	59 (9.5)	155 (25.0)	141 (22.7)	158 (25.4)
	8. Being asked to view or send nude images n (%)	101 (16.3)	22 (3.5)	63 (10.1)	94 (15.1)	341 (54.9)
	9. Rumors about having sex n (%)	123 (19.8)	19 (3.1)	93 (15.0)	100 (16.1)	286 (46.1)
	10. Being named and named sexually related n (%)	115 (18.5)	41 (6.6)	94 (15.1)	140 (22.5)	231 (37.2)
Physical sexual harassment	1. Being touched intentionally n (%)	100 (16.1)	35 (5.6)	99 (15.9)	102 (16.4)	285 (45.9)
	2. Being touched n (%)	104 (16.7)	30 (4.8)	89 (14.3)	93 (15.0)	305 (49.1)
	3. Being hugged without permission n (%)	101 (16.3)	23 (3.7)	105 (16.9)	85 (13.7)	307 (49.4)
	4. Kissed without permission n (%)	108 (17.4)	31 (5.0)	88 (14.2)	91 (14.7)	303 (48.8)
	5. Forced to touch/ touch another person's genitals n (%)	107 (17.2)	30 (4.8)	67 (10.8)	37 (6.0)	380 (61.2)
Non-verbal sexual harassment	1. Glance n (%)	120 (19.3)	51 (8.2)	264 (42.5)	94 (15.1)	92 (14.8)
	2. Being stared at a sensitive part of the body n (%)	114 (18.4)	21 (3.4)	92 (14.8)	133 (21.4)	261 (42.0)
	3. The genitals were exposed by others n (%)	108 (17.4)	25 (4.0)	60 (9.7)	80 (12.9)	348 (56.0)
	4. Being whistled and teased n (%)	137 (22.1)	67 (10.8)	204 (32.9)	96 (15.5)	117 (18.8)
	5. Personal photos were taken/ distributed without consent n (%)	118 (19.0)	49 (7.9)	92 (14.8)	110 (17.7)	252 (40.6)
	6. Forced to view pornographic pictures/ videos n (%)	116 (18.7)	34 (5.5)	60 (9.7)	95 (15.3)	316 (50.9)
	7. Posting sexual comments n (%)	119 (19.2)	33 (5.3)	62 (10.0)	100 (16.1)	307 (49.4)
	8. Being shown or sent nude images by others n (%)	110 (17.7)	29 (4.7)	64 (10.3)	88 (14.2)	330 (53.1)
	9. Receive sexually suggestive images/ video clips via phone n (%)	107 (17.2)	24 (3.9)	73 (11.8)	87 (14.0)	330 (53.1)

(Source: The survey data of the study)



Comparing the results of identifying the manifestations in forms of sexual harassment of middle school and high school students according to the slices such as gender, school level, and living area shows no difference. This identification result has a statistically significant difference (all  $p > 0.05$ ). Understandably, gender, school level, and area of residence were not factors that made a difference in the results of identifying manifestations of sexual harassment among middle and high school students.

Table 3: Comparison of the results of identifying manifestations in forms of sexual harassment of middle and high school students in cross-sections

Factor		N	Language sexual harassment			Physical, sexual harassment			Non-verbal sexual harassment		
			M	SD	p	M	SD	p	M	SD	p
Gender	Male	307	3.40	1.29	0.105	3.68	1.47	0.121	3.49	1.33	0.128
	Female	314	3.56	1.16		3.85	1.34		3.64	1.23	
School-level	Middle School	320	3.55	1.21	0.169	3.79	1.38	0.656	3.62	1.24	0.237
	High school	301	3.41	1.25		3.74	1.44		3.50	1.31	
Living area	Inner-city	328	3.56	1.17	0.111	3.87	1.36	0.053	3.61	1.23	0.408
	Suburban	293	3.40	1.29		3.65	1.45		3.52	1.34	

(Source: The survey data of the study)

## 2. Understanding the causes of sexual harassment

Middle school and high school students found that the group of causes that have the most impact on sexual harassment is the punishment for those who harass people who are not strict ( $M = 3.35$ ). followed by the community's tolerant attitude towards sexual harassment and inadequate knowledge about sexual harassment (with  $M = 3.30$ ). The least influential cause leading to sexual harassment behavior is the concept of "Make flowers for people to pick, make girls for people to tease" in society ( $M = 2.42$ ).

Table 4: Results of knowledge of middle and high school students about the causes of sexual harassment

Causes	M	SD
1. The concept of "Make flowers for people to pick, make girls for people to tease" in society	2.42	1.50
2. Sanctions to punish people who have harassed behavior are not serious	3.35	1.48
3. Community's attitude towards sexual harassment	3.30	1.38
4. Living and working/studying environment	3.07	1.35
5. The concept of sexism	2.92	1.44
6. Women's attitudes towards sexual harassment	3.12	1.36
7. Women and girls dress	3.19	1.45
8. Insufficient knowledge about sexual harassment	3.30	1.46

(Source: The survey data of the study)

There is no statistically significant difference when comparing the knowledge results of middle and high school students about the causes of sexual harassment according to the criteria of gender, and grade level, and living area. This means that whether male or female, middle school or high school students living in suburban or inner-city areas, their understanding of the causes of their behavior Harassment of middle school and high school students is the same. Thus, gender, education level, and living area were not factors that made a difference in the results of understanding the causes of sexual harassment.

Table 5: Comparison of knowledge about the causes of sexual harassment among middle and high school students in cross-sections

	Factor	N	M	SD	p
Gender	Male	307	3.04	1.10	0.312
	Female	314	3.13	0.99	
School-level	Middle School	320	3.12	1.08	0.424
	High school	301	3.05	1.01	
Living area	Inner-city	328	3.10	1.038	0.700
	Suburban	293	3.07	1.06	

(Source: The survey data of the study)

### 3. Recognizing the consequences of sexual harassment

Chart 2 shows the awareness level of middle and high school students about the consequences of sexual harassment. The results showed that the students who participated in the survey found that, to a certain extent, sexual harassment had negative effects on their physical, mental, and personal functioning. Physical consequences were best perceived by students ( $M = 2.46$ ), followed by effects on personal performance ( $M = 2.27$ ), and, thirdly, mental consequences ( $M = 2.01$ ).

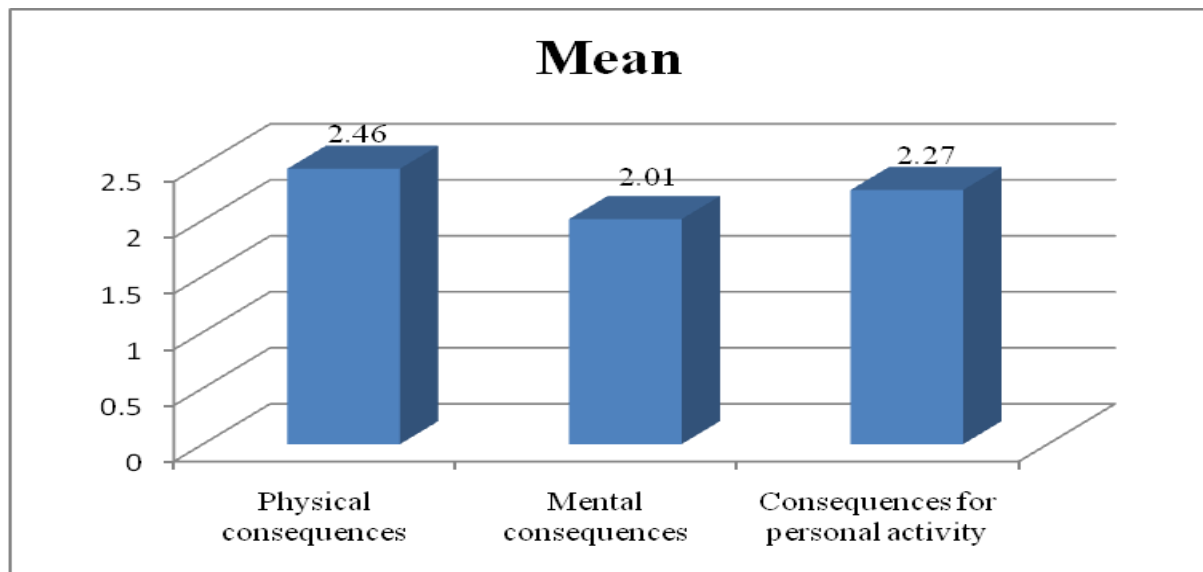


Chart 2: Awareness level of middle and high school students about the consequences of sexual harassment

(Source: The survey data of the study)

Sexual harassment can have many consequences for the individual being harassed. Research results show that middle and high school students perceive the consequences of sexual harassment in many different aspects such as physical, mental, and personal activities. Research results show that, physically, middle and high school students find that, when experiencing sexual harassment, they feel the most nausea ( $M = 3.09$ ). To a lesser extent, the students felt distrustful, less trusting of others, and tormented themselves the most ( $M$  is 2.22, 2.13, and 2.10), respectively. In addition to the physical and emotional consequences, middle and high school students have found that sexual harassment prevents them - victims of sexual harassment - from participating in social activities. social group ( $M = 2.34$ ), have difficulty in learning ( $M = 2.33$ ) and still have difficulty interacting with others ( $M = 2.12$ ).

Table 6: Results of identifying the consequences of sexual harassment among middle and high school students

Consequences groups	Symptoms of sexual harassment	M	SD
Physically	1. Nausea	3.09	1.37
	2. Not eating well	2.22	1.21
	3. Difficulty sleeping	1.99	1.17
	4. Headache	2.34	1.30
	5. Bruising people	2.66	1.39
About the spirit	1. Losing faith in yourself	2.22	1.33
	2. Torment yourself	2.10	1.24
	3. Worry	1.85	1.14
	4 Fear	1.78	1.11
	5. Boredom	1.97	1.14
	6. Poor trust in others	2.13	1.27
About personal activities	1. Difficulty in contact with others	2.12	1.20
	2. Difficulty in learning.	2.33	1.29
	3. Do not dare to participate in collective activities	2.34	1.35

(Source: The survey data of the study)

The results of comparing the mean scores of middle school and high school students regarding the consequences of sexual harassment with the T-Test shown in Table 7 show some of the following points:

There is a statistically significant difference in the results of recognizing the effects of sexual harassment by gender ( $p = 0.000$ ). In which, male students recognized the physical consequences (2.69 compared with 2.24), mental (2.32 compared with 1.69), and the consequences of their activities (2.55 compared with 1.99) all more clearly. female students.

High school students perceive the physical consequences of sexual harassment better than middle school students (2.57 vs. 2.56). There was no statistically significant difference when considering the perceived outcomes for mental consequences ( $p =$

0.620 > 0.05) and consequences for personal activities ( $p = 0.455 > 0.05$ ) of those with sexual harassment. Whether male or female, middle school and high school students are equally aware of the consequences of sexual harassment. Understandably, grade level is not the factor that makes a difference in the results of middle school and high school students' perceptions of mental and personal consequences of harassment caused by the sexual disorder.

Comparing the perceptions of middle and high school students about the physical, mental and personal consequences of sexual harassment in the neighborhood dimension, statistical data showed no statistically significant difference between these groups of students (with  $p$  of 0.986, 0.741, and 0.489, respectively). Thus, middle school and high school students living in urban or suburban areas are equally aware of the consequences of sexual harassment.

Table 7: Comparison of the results of recognizing the consequences of sexual harassment of middle and high school students in cross-sections

Factor		N	Physical consequences			Mental consequences			Consequences for personal activity		
			M	SD	p	M	SD	p	M	SD	p
Gender	Male	307	2.69	1.12	0.000	2.32	1.18	0.000	2.55	1.24	0.000
	Female	314	2.24	0.88		1.69	0.78		1.99	0.96	
School-level	Middle School	320	2.36	1.03	0.013	1.99	1.04	0.620	2.30	1.12	0.455
	High school	301	2.57	1.02		2.03	1.06		2.23	1.16	
Living area	Inner-city	328	2.46	0.98	0.986	1.99	0.98	0.741	2.30	1.13	0.489
	Suburban	293	2.46	1.08		2.02	1.12		2.23	1.16	

(Source: The survey data of the study)

#### 4. Identify risks of sexual harassment

Middle and high school students perceive public areas and public transport as high-risk areas for possible sexual harassment. Empty lanes and streets are the most common locations for sexual harassment ( $M = 3.73$ ), and the second is on buses ( $M = 3.40$ ), followed by other public places such as bus stations, trains, train stations ( $M = 3.28$ ), sidewalks on streets ( $M = 3.21$ ), cinemas, coffee shops ( $M = 3.18$ ), public restrooms ( $M = 3.16$ ).

According to middle and high school students, areas and locations within schools still seem to have the least risk of sexual harassment, which is all areas of the school, such as in classrooms, on school grounds, in the school library, in school toilets, in the school's parking lot, in other hidden corners of the school (M ranges from 1.96 to 2.91).

According to middle school and high school students, the subjects most at risk of causing sexual harassment are strangers (M = 4.12), followed by acquaintances (M = 3.33) and people at risk. The third highest chance is friends (M = 3.23).

Table 8: Results of identification of middle and high school students about the risks of sexual harassment

The risks	Manifestations of the risk of sexual harassment	M	SD
Places at risk of sexual harassment	1. On the bus	3.40	1.32
	2. In the park	3.31	1.28
	3. Market, supermarket, commercial center...	2.75	1.27
	4. In the classroom	2.56	1.32
	5. Stairs/elevators	2.74	1.29
	6. Train station, train station	3.28	1.40
	7. Public restrooms	3.16	1.46
	8. On the schoolyard	1.96	1.14
	9. In gymnasiums, lounges	2.46	1.30
	10. In the school library	2.16	1.22
	11. Toilets in schools	2.91	1.51
	12. In the school parking lot	2.08	1.31
	13. Sidewalks on the streets	3.21	1.47
	14. In other hidden corners of the school	2.54	1.42
	15. The alleys and streets are empty	3.73	1.43
	16. Cinemas, coffee shops	3.18	1.47
Subjects at risk of causing sexual harassment	1. Friends	3.23	1.22
	2. Relatives	2.93	1.24
	3. Teachers in school	2.71	1.20
	4. School staff	2.68	1.19
	5. Acquaintances	3.33	1.18
	6. Strangers	4.12	1.18

(Source: The survey data of the study)

Comparing the average scores of middle and high school students' awareness of the risks of sexual harassment with the T-Test shows that only the results of identifying at-risk subjects. The probability of causing sexual harassment in the sub-level dimension is statistically significant. Middle school students are better at recognizing the risk of sexual harassment than high school students (3.27 vs 3.06,  $p = 0.003$ ), while male students or female students are. Living in urban or suburban areas have the same perception of subjects at risk of causing sexual harassment. Understandably, gender and education level are not factors that make a difference in the level of awareness of subjects at risk of sexual harassment.

There was no statistically significant difference in the results of identifying places at risk of sexual harassment by gender, school level, and living area ( $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, whether male or female, studying at a junior high or high school, living in the inner city or the suburbs, students still recognize places at risk of sexual harassment.

Table 9: Comparison of the results of identifying the risks of sexual harassment of middle and high school students in cross-sections

Factor		N	Places at risk of sexual harassment			Subjects at risk of causing sexual harassment		
			M	SD	p	M	SD	p
Gender	Male	307	2.80	0.95	0.303	3.13	0.96	0.342
	Female	314	2.88	0.92		3.20	0.85	
School-level	Middle School	320	2.91	0.95	0.073	3.27	0.91	0.003
	High school	301	2.77	0.92		3.06	0.89	
Living area	Inner-city	328	2.84	0.92	0.905	3.18	0.92	0.603
	Suburban	293	2.85	0.95		3.15	0.89	

(Source: The survey data of the study)

## Discussion

### Main findings

The results of a structured questionnaire indicate that middle and high school students have a general understanding of the manifestations of sexual harassment, but not a complete understanding. inconsistency or ambiguity in certain formulations.

Students are highly aware of the significant, physical, easily observed, and quantifiable indications of sexual harassment. Middle and high school students may mistake less serious behaviors expressed through words or nonverbal gestures for teasing or flirting. These findings are also consistent with those of [Ei and Bowen \(2002\)](#); [Ekore \(2012\)](#).

The students discovered that the primary causes of sexual harassment were a lack of harsh punishment for harassing others and the community's tolerance for sexual harassment. and an insufficient understanding of sexual harassment.

Middle and high school children are aware of the implications of sexual harassment in a variety of areas, including physical, mental, and personal activities. When confronted with sexual harassment, nausea is a physical outcome; loss of trust, diminished trust in others, and self-harm are psychological outcomes; and not daring to participate in social activities, having difficulty learning, and having difficulty interacting with others are personal outcomes of sexual harassment.

Middle and high school students are aware that public spaces (alleys, empty streets; railway stations, train stations; walkways on streets; movies, coffee shops) and public transportation (on buses) are high-risk sites for sexual harassment. Children perceive areas and locations within the school as the least likely to occur.

From the perspective of middle and high school kids, strangers are the most likely source of sexual harassment. This finding is consistent with the findings of [Bowman \(1993\)](#) on students regarding street sexual harassment, in which the perpetrators were similarly primarily identified as strangers.

The T-Test results indicated that gender, school level, and living location had no effect on identifying indications of sexual harassment or understanding the causes of sexual harassment. The causes of sexual harassment and the results of a survey of middle and high school students to identify places at risk of sexual harassment.

There is no statistically significant difference in the outcomes of identifying persons at risk of sexual harassment based on gender, mental consequences recognition, or sexual behaviors consequences. in terms of grade level, as a result of sexual harassment. There was also no statistically significant difference in the physical and mental consequences of sexual harassment and the ramifications for personal activities.



Male students have a more precise perception of physical, mental, and personal consequences than female pupils. Middle school students outperform high school students in identifying possible targets of sexual harassment, but high school students outperform junior high school students in recognizing the physical repercussions of sexual harassment.

### **Limitations of the study**

This is a study of middle and high school students' perceptions of sexual harassment in three provinces of Vietnam in 2021. Certain restrictions apply to this investigation. To begin, because this is a cross-sectional study, establishing a cause-and-effect relationship is difficult. Second, because middle and high school students volunteer their information freely, recall bias may emerge during the interview procedure. Additional research should be conducted to address these constraints. Additionally, because this is a study conducted in three provinces, the findings may not be generalizable to all Vietnamese middle and high school students...

### **Conclusions**

While middle school and high school students have a general understanding of the manifestations of sexual harassment, there is still some uncertainty about some forms. Students demonstrated the greatest ability to recognize apparent, quantifiable, and observable evidence of physical sexual harassment and verbal or nonverbal expressions of sexual harassment. can be confused with the act of flirting or teasing.

From the perspective of middle and high school students, the most significant reasons of sexual harassment are the punishment for those who are not strict with the harasser, the community's liberal attitude toward sexual harassment, and insufficient understanding about sexual harassment.

Students in middle and high school report that sexual harassment has damaged their physical, mental, and psychological functioning to varying degrees. Students are most aware of physical implications, followed by affects on personal functioning and, last, mental consequences. According to middle and high school kids' awareness, strangers are the subjects most likely to cause sexual harassment.

Middle and high school kids see public spaces and transit as high-risk venues for potential sexual harassment, while regions and locations within schools are perceived as low-risk.

Male students perceive physical and mental repercussions, as well as penalties for personal activities, more vividly than female students, according to the T-Test results. Middle school students outperform high school students in detecting prospective sexual offenders, but high school students outperform junior high school students in recognizing the physical repercussions of sexual harassment.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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