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Research on Ways to Educate Children on How to Avoid Sexual Abuse: A Case of Vietnamese Children

Abstract

All children in the community are at risk of being sexually abused, including those living in poor or well-to-do families. Not only girls but also male children can become victims of sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse not only causes scars on their bodies, but also children who suffer the scars. It is worth mentioning that after being abused, victims often do not or dare to talk about what happened to them. Most sexual abusers are men and most children are abused by people they know, like relatives, family friends, or neighbours, etc. Sometimes this abuse goes on for a long time, even years. A common trick of the subjects is to take advantage of their trust or influence to seduce and threaten to commit acts of sexual abuse against children. The article analyzes the factors leading to this situation, especially in Vietnam, in order to find suitable solutions. The results show that close coordination between family, school and society plays an important role.

Keywords: Harassed Victims, Sexual Harassment, Perceptions of People, Effect.

Introduction

Recently, there have been many cases related to violence and abuse of children in some parts of Vietnam. According to statistics of the Ministry of Public Security, in 2020 alone, the whole country discovered 1,945 cases of abuse of 2,008 children (of which 1,349 cases of sexual abuse, 1,576 children were sexually abused). About 97% of cases were discovered that the sex offenders knew the victim. More worryingly, when child sexual abuse has crept in and appeared in educational institutions - an environment that is considered safe and healthy for children to practice and perfect their personality, the abuser. They are the ones who have the right to teach their own character. Sexual harassment is a burning problem in today's society. But people's perception of this is often ambiguous. They do not know what behavior is considered sexual harassment and there are people who confuse sexual harassment with sexual abuse. That is why it is difficult for people to recognize what behavior is

harassment. Even the victims themselves are sometimes unaware, so they cannot speak up to protect themselves, especially children (Kenny et al., 2008).

Research Content

Definition of Sexual Harassment

According to the Code of Conduct on Sexual Harassment at Work (2015), "Sexual harassment" is an act of a sexual nature that affects the dignity of women and men, and unreasonable insults to the recipient, and creates an unstable, intimidating, hostile, and unpleasant work environment (Wurtele & Kenny, 2010).

According to Nhat Le (2018), the victim will have physical injuries such as abdominal pain, headaches, insomnia, eating disorders, etc. Besides, mental damage is also an important factor. Dangerous harm that goes unnoticed has serious psychological effects and lasts a lifetime. Children are especially vulnerable to mental

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illness and affect the future the most (Sau et al, 2020).

Sexual harassment can be physical, verbal or non-verbal behavior, including the following main contents. Sexual harassment by physical behavior from touching, or intentionally unwanted touching, touching, caressing, pinching, hugging or kissing to sexual assault (Danh & Hoi,2021). Verbal sexual harassment includes socially, culturally inappropriate, and unwanted comments, with sexual implications such as sexually suggestive jokes or comments about clothing or someone's body in their presence or direction. This also includes unsolicited offers and requests or persistent personal outings. Non-verbal sexual harassment includes unwanted actions such as provocative body language, indecent expressions, erotic glances, continuous winking, finger gestures, etc. It also includes the display of sexually explicit materials, images, objects, computer screens, posters, e-mails, notes, and sexually related messages (Kenny et al., 2008).

Methodology

The article uses data analysis method and compares it with current and previous research

documents to clarify related issues according to qualitative analysis method. This comparison clarifies the problems to be solved and on the basis of the application of available data, the article will analyze the objective and subjective causes, from which there are suitable solutions.

Results and Discussion

In 2019, Vietnam had 24,776,733 children, accounting for 25.75% of the total population of the country. In recent years, with the attention of branches, levels, the whole political system and the whole society, the work of child protection, care and education has made positive changes and achieved many important achievements, ensuring the better and better implementation of children's rights. However, from January 1, 2015 to June 30, 2019, the whole country has detected, criminally handled and prosecuted. Administrative penalties: 8,442 cases of child abuse with 8,709 children being abused. In which: Sexual abuse: 6,432 children, accounting for 73.85% of the total number of abused children (Figure 1).

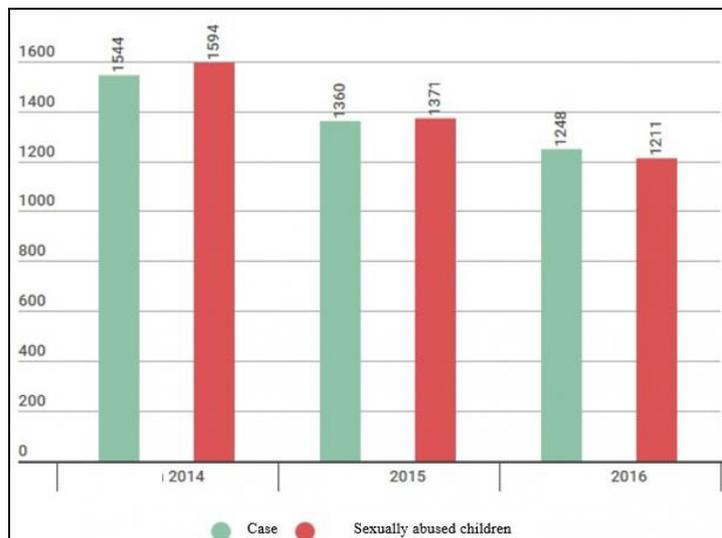


Figure 1.

The number and case of sexually abused children from 2014-2016

There are still many cases of children being abused but not detected in time and adequately to handle, especially violent acts that cause physical and mental harm to children. Many cases of child abuse occurred in private and isolated places; many cases occur at home, few denunciations; many cases of abuse occurred for a long time before being discovered; There is a case where parents know their child is being abused but do not report it for different reasons; Many abusers take advantage of social networks

to get names, addresses, and fake identities, so the collection, investigation and handling of information by the authorities face many difficulties, etc. on the other hand, monitoring. Statistics on the number of abused children have not been given due attention. This leads to the number of cases of child abuse detected and handled in the reports that do not fully reflect the actual situation of abused children (Sau Nguyen Thi Ut & Hoi Huynh Tan, 2020).

Some Reasons of Sexual Harassment in Vietnam

It can be said that cases of violence and sexual abuse of children have formed as an alarming social evil.

Firstly, children are people under 16 years old, so the victim is still at a young age, immature, not healthy enough, as well as

capable of protecting and responding to abuse; still afraid to denounce the abuser; limited awareness of abusive behavior.

Second, the abuser is sometimes the person who is supposed to "protect" the child, such as a teacher, a family member or even someone in society who has a negative image into an act of aggression (Nguyen Thi Ut & Huynh Tan, 2020).

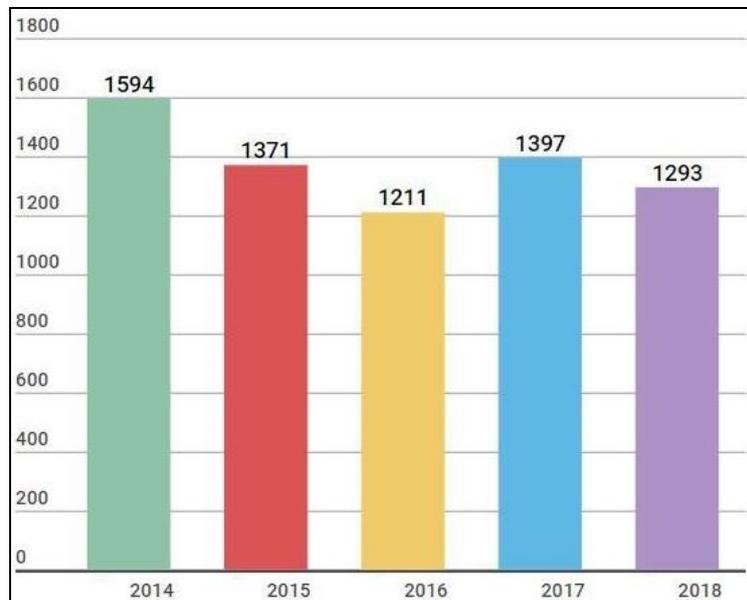


Figure 2.

The number and case of sexually abused children from 2014-2018

The number of children being abused does not seem to stop and this number shows up year by year, and in 2018, this number has not changed significantly (Figure 2). First of all, we cannot deny the fact that the negative side of the market mechanism has gradually crept in and caused negative consequences in society. The risk of unsafety for children appears more and more: the impact of the Internet environment, when the liberalization of network information exploitation causes bad effects, it is easy to create abusive behavior such as filial piety, curious, curious or simply 'imitating'; appeared rampant harmful publications and products that are not suitable with the culture, fine customs and traditions of the Vietnamese people without the control of the authorities; A truly safe and healthy environment has not yet been built for children from within the family where the child lives, from the school where the child studies and in the society itself (Sau et al., 2020).

Secondly, due to gender inequality, gender stereotypes and some traditional beliefs lead to acts of gender-based violence against children, especially girls. Third, because parents and carers themselves lack awareness of risks, lack of prevention skills, legal resolution skills, care and recovery skills for sexually abused children,

both physical and psychological education. Moreover, for society, communication about child sexual abuse, especially sex education as well as educating children on how to protect themselves, is still overlooked and not immediately focused while they are in kindergarten or primary school. Kindergarten, primary schools as well as parents have not focused on educating their children to know how to protect themselves (Hoi, 2021).

Some Cases of Sexual Harassment

We can see how sexual harassment has occurred or persisted in some of the situations below.

Case 1: the harasser is a superior at work. This is probably the most common case. In today's society, everyone wants to have a stable job when looking for a job. In this case the employee will be threatened by the superior. For example, if the employee speaks out, according to the labor law, the superior is not allowed to fire the employee, but in fact, the superior can force the employee to quit by himself. Not to mention that when speaking out, many people will think that this employee made up or that those

colleagues are just small things that are not worth worrying about.

Case 2: the harasser is an adult in the school (teacher, security guard, etc.) (Linh et al, 2020). In this case, the victims of harassment are students who are still sitting at school. School should be the place to teach children the right things and protect them from the complex society when they are immature. That's why parents can safely go to work and send their children here. Sadly, a number of factors have made school no longer a safe place but an obsession for many students. When they are sexually harassed, they do not dare to speak out because they are afraid that adults will ignore them, think they are lying, or think that the issue is not important. Gradually, students no longer trust their teachers and they can only endure being harassed.

Case 3: the harasser is a neighbor or family member. This is a very serious case because they are so close and trust each other that people hardly expect this matter. Children are often the victims in this case. Because they are still young and still have no awareness or knowledge about this subject. Parents trust their relatives and neighbors, so they only tell their children to be careful, not to talk to strangers. But it's rare for any parent to tell their child to be careful with everyone around. So many unfortunate cases happened.

Sexual Harassment in Vietnamese Law

According to the Penal Code (1999), there are six crimes of sexual abuse: rape, child rape, rape, child rape and lewdness against children. However, at present, in fact, there have appeared many very dangerous acts of sexual abuse but have not been criminalized such as lewd acts, sexual harassment... This leads to the phenomenon of creating holes in the provisions of the law to omit criminals about this group of crimes (Sau & Hoi, 2021).

That's why so many unfortunate cases happened. The harasser remains out of the law or is only lightly punished, and the victim can carry the fear for the rest of their life.

The current Vietnamese law has a large loophole that tolerates sexual harassment or assault. Currently, this behavior is sanctioned by Point a, Clause 1, Article 5 of Decree 167/2013/ND-CP, which applies to the person who commits the act of "having rude, provocative gestures and words, teasing, insulting the honor and dignity of others", with a fine ranging from 100,000 VND to 300,000 VND.

This Decree also stipulates a fine of between VND 500,000 and 1,000,000 for "act of sexual incitement or physical abuse" but only applies to the abused person being a family member but not a member of the wife or

husband. If you want to criminally prosecute someone who sexually harasses or assaults, there is currently no suitable law.

The Penal Code 2015 and before of Vietnam also do not have clear provisions on sexual harassment or assault. Obviously, acts of groping, harassment or sexual assault cannot apply the law on rape and rape. Nor can the law on lewdness be applied to a person under the age of 16 if the victim is an adult (Hoi, 2021).

The phrase "sexual harassment" is used in the Labor Code 2012, applied in the workplace. However, this law also does not specify what acts are considered sexual harassment. All an employee can do if they are sexually harassed at work is to have the right to unilaterally terminate their employment contract (Linh et al, 2020).

Proposed Solutions

From the above reasons, we realize that, in order to protect children from violence and sexual abuse, it is necessary for the participation of the whole society, from the voices of the children to their families and schools and authorities.

It is necessary to raise children's awareness about legal knowledge, self-protection skills, and the right to speak up when being abused.

In the family, parents and family members pay more attention to all aspects of their children, have the responsibility to respect, listen to, consider, respond to, and explain their opinions and aspirations; facilitate and guide children to access safe information sources, appropriate to their age, gender and comprehensive development. On the family side, parents should pay more attention to their children. Parents should tell children who should be contacted and how. For example, parents can hug, siblings can slap their shoulders, acquaintances and relatives can hold hands. In addition, parents should also pay attention to children's expressions in case the child is sexually harassed but does not dare to speak out.

From the school side, it is necessary to organize and create conditions for children to participate in activities such as Ho Chi Minh Young Pioneers Team, Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union, clubs, and extra-curricular activities., social activities to provide information on educational policies, laws and regulations relevant to students; create conditions for children to make recommendations and express their opinions and aspirations; receive opinions, recommendations and aspirations of children, settle them according to the scope of their assigned responsibilities or transfer them to competent agencies or organizations for consideration, settlement and notify the settlement results to children. There should be

education sessions for students about sexual harassment. At the same time, knowledge about sexual harassment should also be disseminated to the parents of the children. Along with that, there must be appropriate punishment for those who sexually harass in schools (Rudolph, et al., 2018).

The competent agencies ensure information, communication and educational products on child abuse prevention and control; focus on inter-sectoral inspection and examination on the performance of responsibilities by heads of local governments, agencies, organizations, educational institutions, and service providers in dealing with children's problems; support, intervene and handle child abuse cases within the responsibility and competence. Strengthen coordination between agencies, state management units and judicial agencies in prevention, detection, support and intervention for abused children and strictly handle cases and child abuse.

On the Government side, it is necessary to take measures to propagate and educate to raise people's awareness of sexual harassment. Specifically, helping people know what behavior is sexual harassment, how it affects the victim's psychology, and how to prevent sexual harassment. In addition, the Vietnamese law also needs to be further revised on the crime of sexual harassment so that the harasser receives appropriate punishment and does not dare to repeat the crime.

In addition, each of us should know how to care and listen to those around us because maybe some of them are victims of sexual harassment who are looking for help. In addition, helping victims of sexual harassment overcome psychological shock is also very important (Linh et al, 2020).

Conclusion

Through the content presented above, it can be seen the seriousness of sexual harassment. It not only affects the victim at that time, but also leaves a legacy later. In particular, people's awareness of this issue and loopholes in the law are the main reasons why sexual harassment cases continue to take place. With the development of society, people's living standards are improved. However, besides the positive benefits, the widespread sale of depraved, sexy, erotic movies, etc. has damaged the morality of some people, especially young people, leading to an increase current child sex offenders. Therefore, parents should pay more attention to their children and actively equip their children with self-protection knowledge to avoid the risk of sexual abuse.

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Conflict of Interests

None.

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