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Reaching Out

Preventing and Addressing SOGIE-related
School Violence in Viet Nam



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Contents

Acknowledgements.....	V
Acronyms	VI
Terminology.....	VII
Some informal words related to LGBT commonly used in Viet Nam	IX
Executive Summary	X
Rationale	X
Conceptual Framework.....	X
Literature Review	X
Methodology	X
Findings	XI
Discussion & Recommendations.....	XI
1 Rationale.....	1
1.1 Global Protections Against Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying in Schools	1
1.2 Local Commitments to Improving Viet Nam’s Educational Practice	2
1.3 Considering Contextual Influences.....	2
2 Conceptual Framework: What is SOGIE-related school violence?	5
2.1 Defining SOGIE.....	5
2.2 SOGIE-related School Violence.....	7
2.3 What can SOGIE-related school violence involve?	8
2.4 Where does SOGIE-related school violence occur?	9
3 Literature Review: SOGIE-related School Violence in the Asia-Pacific Region	11
3.1 Extent of SOGIE-related School Violence.....	11
3.2 Impacts of SOGIE-related School Violence	13
3.3 Need for a Viet Nam Study on SOGIE-related School Violence	14
3.4 Research Objectives	15
4 Methodology	17
4.1 Research Approach & Design.....	17
4.2 Study Sites & Timeline	18
4.3 Ethical issues	18
4.4 Quantitative Research.....	19
4.5 Qualitative research.....	21
4.6 Research Limitations.....	23

5 Findings	25
5.1 Participant Demographics.....	25
5.2 Awareness of, and Attitudes to, SOGIE-related School Violence.....	27
5.3 LGBT Students' Experiences of Violence.....	30
5.4 LGBT Students' Perceived School Safety.....	36
5.5 Perceived Motivations Behind SRGBV.....	38
5.6 Responses to SOGIE-related School Violence.....	39
5.7 LGBT Students' Impacts & Interventions.....	42
6 Discussion & Recommendations	45
6.1 Discussion.....	45
6.2 Recommendations.....	47
6.3 Conclusion.....	49
Endnotes	50

Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Forms of violence.....	8
Figure 2: Settings where SOGIE-related school violence occurs.....	9
Figure 3: Agreement with the statement 'Calling someone names like <i>'thằng béo,' pê đê,'</i> <i>'nhà quê'</i> etc. is not offensive at all'.....	29
Figure 4: Agreement with the statement 'Teasing feminine male students or masculine female students is harmless'.....	29
Figure 5: Student perpetrators' reported motivations for their violence against peers.....	38
Figure 6: Student victims' reported responses to violence.....	39
Figure 7: Key people LGBT student victims reported seeking assistance from.....	40
Figure 8: Response by LGBT student bystanders to violent incidents.....	41
Table 1: Composition of the IDIs.....	21
Table 2: Composition of the FGDs.....	21
Table 3: LGBT students' experiences of violence compared to non-LGBT students.....	31
Table 4: Types of violence experienced by LGBT and non-LGBT students in the last six months.....	34
Table 5: Students' assessments of their safety at school.....	37
Table 6: Reactions by student bystanders.....	41
Table 7: Wellbeing and academic outcomes for student victims of SRGBV.....	43

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Acronyms

BOET	Bureau of Education and Training
CCIHP	The Centre for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
DOET	Department of Education and Training
FGD	Focus group discussion
GBT	Gay or bisexual man/boy (men/boys) and male-to-female transgender person(s)
GBV	Gender-based violence
GSHS	Global school-based student health survey
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
ICRW	International Centre for Research on Women
IDI	In-depth interview
iSEE	Institute for Studies of Society, Economics and Environment
LBT	Lesbian or bisexual woman/girl (women/girls) and female-to-male transgender person(s)
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SMS	Short Message Service
SOGIE	Sexual orientation and gender identity and expression
SRGBV	School-related gender-based violence
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNTF	United Nations Trust Fund
VNIES	The Viet Nam Institute of Educational Sciences



Terminology

Adolescent

Aged from 10 to 19 years.

Bisexual

Someone who is attracted to, has romantic feelings for, and/or has sex with men and women.

Bullying

Repeated aggressive behaviour that intentionally inflicts injury or discomfort through physical contact, verbal attacks, fighting or psychological manipulation. Bullying involves an imbalance of power and can include teasing, taunting, and use of hurtful names, physical violence, or social exclusion. A bully can operate alone or within a group of peers. Bullying may be direct, such as one child demanding money or possessions from another, or indirect, such as a group of students spreading rumours.

Child

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, anyone below the age of 18 years unless majority is attained earlier under national law. Current legislation in Viet Nam defines a child as being under the age of 16.

Cisgender

A term used for people whose gender identity or expression aligns with the sex assigned at birth.

Come out

A term used for disclosing one's sexual orientation, gender identity or expression to others.

Cyberbullying

Harassment through e-mail, cell phones, text messages, social media, or websites.

Discrimination

Any form of arbitrary distinction, exclusion, or restriction affecting a person, usually, but not only, by virtue of an inherent personal characteristic or perception of belonging to a particular group.

Gay

Same-sex romantic feelings, sexual attraction, same-sex sexual behaviour, and same-sex cultural identity in general.

Gender and sex

The term "sex" refers to biologically determined differences, whereas "gender" refers to differences in social roles and relations. Gender roles are learned through socialisation and vary widely within and between cultures. Gender roles are also affected by age, class, race, ethnicity, and religion, as well as by geographical, economic, and political environments.

Gender-based violence (GBV)

Violence that occurs as a result of normative role expectations associated with one's gender and unequal power relationships between genders.

Gender expression

How a person expresses their gender as masculine, feminine, combined or neutral or example. This tends to be visible to others, through clothes and behaviour for example.

Gender identity

How a person identifies as being a man, woman, neither, or both, or a combination, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned to them at birth. Unlike gender expression, gender identity is not visible to others.

Gender non-conforming

When a person's gender expression generally does not conform with their assigned sex at birth.

Homophobia

Fear, rejection, or aversion, often in the form of stigmatising attitudes or discriminatory behaviour, towards people who have sex with and/or sexual attraction to the same gender.

Intersex

People with intersex variations have biologically atypical sex characteristics (whether chromosomal, hormonal or anatomical for example).

Lesbian

A female who experiences sexual attraction to, and the capacity for, an intimate/romantic relationship with other women.

Sex

The classification of people as male, female, or intersex, assigned at birth, typically based on anatomy and biology.

Sexual orientation

Emotional and sexual attraction to another person or other people, who may be of the opposite gender, same gender, or another gender identity. Whether an individual is attracted to the same sex, another sex, or both, the term "gender identity" is used to describe whether an individual defines himself or herself as being a man, woman, or some other gender.

Sexuality

The sexual knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviours of individuals. Its dimensions include the anatomy, physiology, and biochemistry of the sexual response system; sexual identity, orientation, roles and personality; and thoughts, feelings, and relationships. Its expression is influenced by ethical, spiritual, cultural, and moral concerns.

SOGIE-related violence

All forms of violence (explicit and symbolic forms of violence), including fear of violence, that occur in relation to bias against sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. This report focusses on violence in education contexts (including non-formal and formal contexts, such as school premises, on the journey to and from school, and in emergency and conflict settings) which result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm of children (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children or those who are perceived to be). It is based on stereotypes, roles, or norms, attributed to or expected of children because of their sexual orientation or gender identities.

Stigma

Opinions or judgments held by individuals or society that negatively reflect a person or group. Discrimination occurs when stigma is acted on.

Transgender

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity or expression differs from the sex assigned at birth. Transgender identity is not dependent on medical procedures. Includes, for example, people assigned female at birth but who identify as a man (female-to-male or trans man) and people assigned male at birth but who identify as a woman (male-to-female or trans woman).

Transphobia

Fear, rejection, or aversion, often in the form of stigmatising attitudes or discriminatory behaviour, towards people who have a gender identity or expression different to the one assigned to them at birth.

Violence and physical violence

There are many forms of violence and physical violence, including (though not limited to) physical bullying, physical threats, physical assault, attacks with weapons, beatings, arson, and theft.

Violence and social harassment

Emotional and social violence are forms of violence that are also cruel and degrading and violate the rights of children. These forms of violence include embarrassing or shaming, defaming, scapegoating, threatening, frightening, mocking the child, insulting, “Eve-teasing,” gossiping or spreading rumours, cursing or using harsh words, and excluding. These actions may be online or cyber-based (technology-related violence) or in the physical presence of the victim.

Violence and sexual harassment

This may be in the form of verbal innuendo, physical groping or rape.

Some informal words related to LGBT commonly used in Viet Nam

Some terms and slang related to LGBT persons in Viet Nam used in the research and in this report:

Trai thẳng, gái thẳng

These terms refer to male or female individuals who are heterosexual (physically and emotionally attracted to people of the opposite sex). LGBT people may still have sexual relationships with persons who identify as being straight men and straight women.

Bóng lộ

Men who express themselves publicly with feminine characteristics (e.g., body language, clothing, hairstyle) and behaviours and are physically and/or emotionally attracted to other men.

Bóng kín

Men who express themselves with masculine characteristics (e.g., body language, clothing, hairstyle) and behaviours and are not open about their physical and/or emotional attraction to other men.

Pê-đê A derogatory term commonly used to refer to gay or gender non-conforming men.

Ô môi A derogatory term commonly used to refer to lesbian or gender non-conforming women.

Thể giới thứ ba

The common umbrella term for lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people.

Xăng pha nhót, hai thì, hai-phai, ái nam ái nữ, bán nam bán nữ, nửa nạc nửa mỡ (slang insults)

Derogatory terms commonly used to refer to, or imply, with a sense of sarcasm and insults, bisexual, homosexual, and transgender people.

Executive Summary

Rationale

Global human rights legislation protects all people against discrimination and violence in education, irrespective of sex, sexual orientation or gender identity and expression. Homophobic and transphobic violence in schools has been framed by officials as the basis of an international public health crises. UNESCO has particularly targeted homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools in recent years, supporting global and Asia-Pacific research, advocacy and programming. Viet Nam has committed to global and Asia-Pacific efforts to lessen gender-based violence. This includes sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE)-related violence in schools.

Conceptual Framework

SOGIE diversity has been strongly established in the histories of many nations. Recognition of diverse gender expressions has been perhaps more prevalent in the Asia-Pacific region with Samoa's 'fa'afafines' and Thailand's 'kathoey' afforded particular cultural and social roles. Many Asian nations only became less tolerant of diverse SOGIE in their populations after Western influences in the 1800s. SOGIE-related school violence, also called homophobic and transphobic violence, is based on gender stereotypes, roles and norms. It can include verbal, psychosocial, physical and sexual violence.

Literature Review

While diverse legal and cultural contexts around SOGIE have likely impacted data collection on SOGIE-related school violence in Asia-Pacific, research suggests it is highly prevalent. Research shows SOGIE-related school violence – more frequent in schools without policy protection for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (abbreviated to LGBT in this report as in the broader literature) students – has negative impacts on students' education and wellbeing. The literature review highlighted some noteworthy work in countries including Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea and Thailand, among others. The literature review also underscored a gap in the research and emphasised a strong need for national research on the extent, nature, impacts and supports around SOGIE-related school violence in Viet Nam.

Methodology

Research was conducted on the nature and extent of SOGIE-related school violence in schools in North, Central and South Viet Nam as part of a wider study on school-related gender-based violence. Issues of consent and privacy for participants were carefully considered. Stakeholders were enabled to freely discuss the sensitive topic of SOGIE-related school violence due to the support of Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). The research was aided by a range of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (abbreviated to LGBT in this report as in the broader literature) community organizations, departmental and school contacts, and local and international research experts. The study applied an emancipatory methodology aiming to achieve social justice goals. Mixed methods of in-person and online surveys, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were used to collect data from four distinct groups of participants. These included a general sampling of school students, LGBT students, school staff (including administrators and teachers) and parents.

Findings

Evidence from the 3,698 survey participants, 280 Focus-Group Discussion (FGD) participants and 85 In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) with students (including LGBT students), school staff and parents showed many school stakeholders were influenced by constructions of LGBT people as diseased or problematic. LGBT students presented stronger awareness of SOGIE-related school violence than other groups, most particularly verbal violence and its negative long-term effects. SOGIE-related school violence was high in Viet Nam; 71% of LGBT students reported having been physically abused and 72.2% reported having been verbally abused. Some LGBT students revealed that they had experienced situations in which schools staff were perpetrators of violence. LGBT youth experienced clear negative academic and wellbeing outcomes, ranging from lowered grades and school drop-out, to depression and suicidal ideation. Almost a quarter of LGBT students who had experienced violence had also experienced suicidal ideation and 14.9% attempted to engage in self-harm or suicide.

Gay, bisexual and gender non-conforming male and male-to-female transgender (GBT) students faced highly significant increases in risk for all kinds of violence compared to lesbian, bisexual and gender non-conforming female and female-to-male transgender (LBT) students. This appeared to be influenced by factors including perpetrator motivations of punishing 'feminine' expressions on male bodies, and increased respect for 'masculine' expressions on female bodies – within the context of a Confucian culture that broadly privileges masculinity. LGBT students were notably less confident in their schools' efforts to prevent violence than other students in the FGDs and IDIs. The surveyed LGBT students who had experienced violence were more likely to report that they sought assistance from friends and less likely to seek help from staff than other students who had experienced violence. Research findings suggest an imperative need to raise awareness and capacity of school administrators and teachers with regard to SOGIE-related school violence to empower them to act as agent of change in making schools safer places for LGBT students.

Discussion & Recommendations

Curriculum developers and policy-makers need to actively redress the gaps in the knowledge of all education stakeholder groups on SOGIE and LGBT through clear education resources revision and distinct guidelines. Schools need to roll-out both educational interventions and practical support features (uniform flexibility and unisex toilets) in holistic efforts to create safe and supportive environments for LGBT students. Further studies could trial various SOGIE-related school violence interventions in schools.





1 Rationale

“Homophobic bullying of young people in schools and local communities (...) is a grave violation of human rights and a public health crisis.”¹

United Nations
Secretary-General
Ban Ki-moon,
8 December 2011.

Key Points

- The UN and UNESCO have recently drawn attention to homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools as a violation of children’s right to education, and other rights.
- Viet Nam has committed to a range of global and Asia-Pacific efforts to combat school-related homophobic and transphobic bullying and violence.
- This report sits within broader efforts by the Viet Nam Government and Ministry of Education and Training to recognise, and respond to, violence in Viet Nam schools on the basis of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE).

1.1 Global Protections Against Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying in Schools

Education is a basic human right, recognised in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).²⁻⁵ Education rights’ advocates from around the world joined efforts in 2010 to push for recognition of sexual orientation as a protected ground in international human rights legislation – and succeeded.⁶ Then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon called homophobic bullying in schools globally a moral outrage, a grave violation to human rights and a public health crisis,¹ underscoring the widespread personal and physical consequences to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (abbreviated to LGBT in this report as in the broader literature) students from the discrimination and violence they are subjected to in schools around the world. The UN started to prioritise LGBT education rights issues; 200 UN Member States convened for ‘Stop Bullying – Ending Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity’ and the Born Free and Equal policy was released.^{7,8}

UNESCO’s ‘First International Consultation on Homophobic Bullying in Educational Institutions’ in Brazil was attended by governments and researchers from all global regions including members from Asia-Pacific (and specifically Viet Nam’s Center for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population [CCIHP]), who called for education policy and practice change.^{9,10} The Global Network Combatting Homophobic and Transphobic Prejudice and Violence in Schools (the Global Network) was formed and met every 6 months, promoting policy goals.¹¹ The United Nations released clarifications about the reach of international human rights protection, releasing booklets on the topic and stating:

‘All people, irrespective of sex, sexual orientation or gender identity, are entitled to enjoy the protections provided for by international human rights law, including in respect of rights to life, security of person and privacy, the right to be free from torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, the right to be free from discrimination and the right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.’⁹

1.2 Local Commitments to Improving Viet Nam's Educational Practice

In 2015, UNESCO Bangkok hosted the first ever 'Asia-Pacific Consultation on School-Related Bullying on the basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity/Expression'. This groundbreaking event was attended by representatives from Viet Nam's Government and Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), amongst representatives from other Asia-Pacific governments, non-government organizations and academic institutions. Viet Nam's representatives contributed their visions to the development of common regional commitments for educational reform on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression outlined in the event's report.¹² Viet Nam has reaffirmed these commitments by its adherence to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Beijing Platform for Action which call for measures to protect all human beings from all forms of violence.¹³ These steps demonstrate the Vietnamese Government's support to the right of all children and young people to access quality education in safe, secure and non-violent learning environments.

Despite these commitments, global, regional and local research demonstrates that schools and other educational institutions in Viet Nam are not always safe and inclusive spaces for children and young people. In fact, for many, schools not only feel unsafe, they can also be sites of physical, verbal, psychosocial and sexual violence.¹⁴⁻¹⁷ This violence appears to be on the rise with incidents reported to the Department of Child Care and Protection hotline increasing by a factor of 13 in the last decade.¹⁸ Research in two schools of Hai Phong City showed that nearly 57% of the students surveyed had been bullied.¹⁹ Further, a field survey carried out by the Centre for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population (CCIHP) with 520 lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (abbreviated to LGBT in this report as in the broader literature) at the average age of 21 has shown that 41% suffered from discrimination and violence in either general education schools or universities.²⁰ In fact, the LGBT community in Viet Nam can be victims of gender-based violence of various forms (e.g. exclusion, discrimination, or bullying). This violence can negatively impact the wellbeing and education performance of children and young people.²¹⁻²³ In the long-term such violence may adversely affect employment prospects and the economic development of the country.²⁴

However, existing local policies in Viet Nam do provide a supportive platform for prevention efforts. The *National Policy Framework for Gender Equality* was approved for the period 2011-2020 with the goal of highlighting the importance of gender equality for the socio-economic development of the country, including in education efforts towards this end. Furthermore, unlike many of its neighbours, Viet Nam now no longer has a ban on same-sex marriage, and has indeed never had punitive laws around either male or female same-sex relations.²⁵ Additionally, Viet Nam passed a landmark law by a vote of 282-84 in 2015 enshrining transgender people's right to legal recognition of a gender identity other than that indicated by their sex rights for transgender people and paving the way to allow those who have undergone gender reassignment to register their legal identity under their new sex.²⁶ Along with these strategies, a *National Targeted Program on Gender Equality* was developed for the period of 2011 to 2015 and as Viet Nam moves forward with new strategies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, there is a clear opportunity for evaluation and reflection on current conditions around SOGIE in education.²⁷

1.3 Considering Contextual Influences

In line with the international requirements to 'protect all individuals from violent behaviours originating from discrimination against LGBT people' in UN Resolution No. 17/19 on Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity/Expression,²⁸ the Government of Viet Nam, including the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), has commissioned the study reported upon in this document, with the support of UNESCO. The study aimed to build Viet Nam's evidence base regarding the nature, extent

and impact of homophobic and transphobic bullying and violence around sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE). The overarching goal of this work was to generate research which could inform future programmatic initiatives so that Viet Nam can put into practice its commitments to creating safe schooling environments. This work was conducted as a smaller study that sat within a wider project exploring school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) in Viet Nam.

This report is divided into separate sections which address the rationale, conceptual framework, literature review, methodology, findings, implications and recommendations arising from the study. The next section considers the conceptual framework for the study, including key definitions and parameters around SOGIE-related school violence.





2 Conceptual Framework

What is SOGIE-related school violence?

“Homophobic bullying is a social and systemic phenomenon that occurs in particular kinds of institutions, including schools, colleges, universities and other places of learning. It involves clearly differentiated roles (e.g. victim, perpetrator, witness) and reinforces or creates power-based relationships and existing social norms, with victims selected on the basis of (negatively perceived and culturally defined) difference. Homophobic or transphobic bullying is learned behaviour. It represents one (among many) manifestation of violence and intimidation driven by prejudice. The sources of such prejudice are complex and multiple, including elements of the educational institution itself.”¹⁰

UNESCO
Education Sector
responses to
Homophobic Bullying
in Educational
Institutions

Key Points

- Bullying on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression (SOGIE), also called homophobic and transphobic bullying, stems from gender stereotypes, roles and norms.
- SOGIE-related school violence can be verbal, social, physical, sexual and technology-based.
- It can be perpetrated in a range of settings in and around schools, from school bathrooms to virtual locations.

2.1 Defining SOGIE

The term **‘sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE)’** is preferred by the UN and UNESCO in global discussions of homophobic and transphobic bullying.¹⁰ It is useful as a broad umbrella-term which allows for many different notions of sexual and gender difference seen in various countries around the world.

Diversity in **sexual orientation** (emotional and sexual attraction to other people, who may be of the opposite gender, same gender, or another gender identity) has been strongly established in the histories of many nations. Sexual orientation variance which covers same-sex attraction can include, but is not limited to, such ‘labels’ as homosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, fluid, queer and many other terms. Around 2,500 years ago Vatsyayana’s *Kama Sutra* had devoted an entire chapter to homosexuality; male same-sex relationships appeared in Tamil literature in the 3rd century BC and female same-sex relationships were seen in Urdu poetry during the 1700s.²⁹ Ancient China documented histories of same-sex relationships as a normal facet of life prior to Western influence in the 1800s;³⁰ a similar pattern of same-sex relationship tolerance disrupted by Western influence has also been evident in Ancient Japan.³¹ Whilst in early modern history British colonisation spread anti-sodomy laws throughout many countries and Western psychiatry pathologised homosexual attraction, evidence from researchers like Kinsey and members of the American Psychological Association informed the dominant contemporary

view in the West that homosexuality is a common and healthy occurrence in both humans and animals – which did not in itself mar psychological health or happiness, nor constitute gender confusion.³²⁻³⁴ The Australian Psychological Society has emphasised the need for school psychologists to move away from any notion of ‘fixing’ diverse sexual orientations in students to fit heterosexual norms; and towards affirming approaches and notions of creating supportive school environments for these students.³⁵

It is difficult to put a number on those with diverse sexual orientations partially because sexual orientation can cover identity, attraction and behaviours. These elements are all measured differently in research and can be contradictory – somebody who identifies as heterosexual may still feel attraction for people of their same sex or may even have same-sex encounters, for example.³⁶ A large-scale Australian study (of 20,055 participants aged 16-69) found that 3.5% of the group self-identified as gay/



lesbian or bisexual (1.9% of males identified as gay vs. 1.2% of females; 1.3% of males were bisexual vs. 2.2% of females).³⁷ However, nine percent of males and 19% of females had some history of same-sex sexual experiences; this suggested that people were more flexible in their sexuality ‘in practice’ than their publicly declared identifications suggested. Overall, amongst secondary students globally, it is generally estimated that about 10% identify as gay or lesbian and bisexuality may count for over one-third of adolescents’ sexual experiences.³⁸ Most same-sex attracted students recognised their same-sex attraction around puberty (11–16 years), although it is important to note that over a third knew at earlier ages (age 10 to under seven) or claim they ‘always knew’.³⁹

Diversity in **gender identity** (how a person identifies as being a man, woman, neither, or both, or a combination, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned to them at birth) **and expression** (how a person expresses their gender through manners, dress, social roles and other means) has been documented for thousands of years in many societies with varying levels of acceptance.⁴⁰ Gender variance can include, but is not limited to, such ‘labels’ as transgender, transsexual, transvestite, gender fluid, gender queer, cross-dress, drag queen, drag king and so on. For 4,000 years India has recognized gender ambiguous ‘*Hijra*’ (a third sex neither male nor female);⁴¹ while in Malaysian history there has been recognition of ‘*mak nyahs*’ (referring to males who may see themselves as feminine or as doing ‘female work’ right through to male-to-female transgender people);⁴² and Thailand has acknowledged ‘*kathoey*’ (a combination of transgender female or feminine gay male) identity.⁴³ Samoa has had cultural and familial roles for ‘*fa’afafines*’ (of male sex at birth but embodying male and female traits/behaviours) said to be more flexible than those generally available for females – roles akin to those of the Cook Islands’ *akava’ine*, Fiji’s *vakasalewalewa*, New Zealand’s *whakawahine*, Niue’s *akafifine*, Papua New Guinea’s *palopa*, Tonga’s *fakaleiti* and Tuvalu’s *pinapinaaine*.⁴⁴ Over time, medical understandings of gender diversity have evolved to include notions of both biological and socio-cultural influences on individuals’ gender expressions.^{45,46}

The contemporary global population of gender variant people is increasing exponentially due to even greater social recognition of gender diversity, and therefore an increased willingness for people to express their diversity. The United Kingdom (UK)’s Equality and Human Rights Commission’s online global study estimated that 1.4% of the global population has questioned their gender identity to the extent that they have engaged in any part of a gender reassignment process – including various social and medical efforts to alter a person’s assigned gender towards their preferred gender expression.⁴⁷ In UK records, the population of gender diverse people presenting for gender affirmation treatments has grown by 11% per year in the last decade.⁴⁸ The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has estimated that there are around 9.5 million gender diverse people in the Asia-Pacific region, although the report notes that this estimation does not account for female-to-male transgender populations (which have been less visible and organized).⁴⁹ Many figures for transgender populations in Asia-Pacific have historically been considered to be substantially underestimated due to increased trends towards these identifications over time, low survey response rates and the reality that many people who are gender diverse do not fit ‘typical’ or set notions of transgender identity or do not ‘fully’ transition through surgical and hormonal treatments – making the group difficult to wholly capture in research.⁵⁰

2.2 SOGIE-related School Violence

UNESCO has defined SOGIE-related school violence as including violence and intimidation, based on learned prejudices privileging heterosexuality (and within this, traditional male and female social norms).¹⁰ Jones and Hillier have applied the concept to physical violence, verbal violence, social violence, technology-related violence and other forms of violence on the basis of students’ sexual orientation or gender identity.²³ Smith *et al.* further extended the definition in relation to include school-related

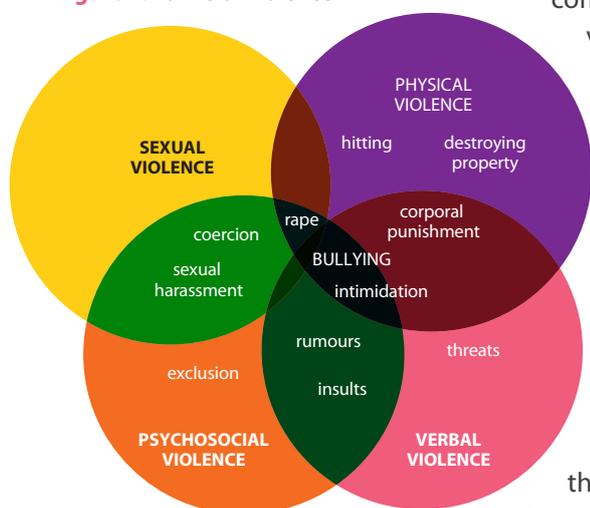
violence against students on the basis of their gender non-conformity and expression.⁵¹ Hearn’s work directs sociologists to consider environmental institutional factors, such as gender and sexuality-related treatment and organizational response practices around violence, as important elements in potentially impacting violence.⁵² Similarly, UNESCO has highlighted that SOGIE-related school violence manifests both socially and institutionally.¹⁰

Accordingly, SOGIE-related school violence is understood in this report as covering sexuality and gender-identity/expression-related bullying – both acts and threats – occurring in and around educational contexts. These may result in physical, verbal, sexual, psychosocial or technology-related harm to children. It is based on gender and sexuality stereotypes, particularly roles and norms expected of children because of the privileging of heterosexual norms and gender roles in society. Any learner, irrespective of their sexual orientation or whether they are gender-non-conforming, may be affected.¹⁶ It can take place in school, or on the way to and from school. It can impact both younger and older children in different levels of schooling.⁵³ It can be perpetrated by peers, teaching and non-teaching staff. The Internet and mobile phone technologies have also extended its reach through cyberbullying.⁵⁴ The ways that schools impact SOGIE-related bullying (for better or worse) are of key interest in this report; alongside the impacts of intersecting forms of marginalisation, discrimination and vulnerabilities.

2.3 What can SOGIE-related school violence involve?

The forms of SOGIE-related school violence identified in the conceptual literature are complex and diverse and include verbal, psychosocial, physical and sexual violence (see Figure 1).⁵⁵ Sexual violence is often recognised as threats and acts of unwanted sexual touching,

Figure 1: Forms of violence³⁸



comments and pictures, sexual favours and rape. Physical violence may occur when a learner is beaten, kicked, pinched, hit with something and, in some extreme cases, burnt with acid. Physical violence can also be in the form of corporal punishment, which is recognised as any punishment where physical force is intentionally used to cause pain or discomfort. Most involves “smacking”, slapping, or “spanking” children with the hand or an implement but it can also include shaking or throwing children, pulling hair or forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions. Verbal violence is characterised by verbal taunting, teasing, gossiping, curses, harsh words and the spreading of rumours. Social exclusion, threats and humiliation exemplify psychosocial violence.

Different forms of SOGIE-related school violence interact and overlap. Bullying, for instance, occurs when there is an imbalance of power between the “bully” and the “bullied” and can happen through physical contact, verbal attacks, social exclusion, and psychological manipulation. Students are bullied when they are repeatedly and intentionally exposed to harmful and/or aggressive behaviour that results in injury or discomfort.

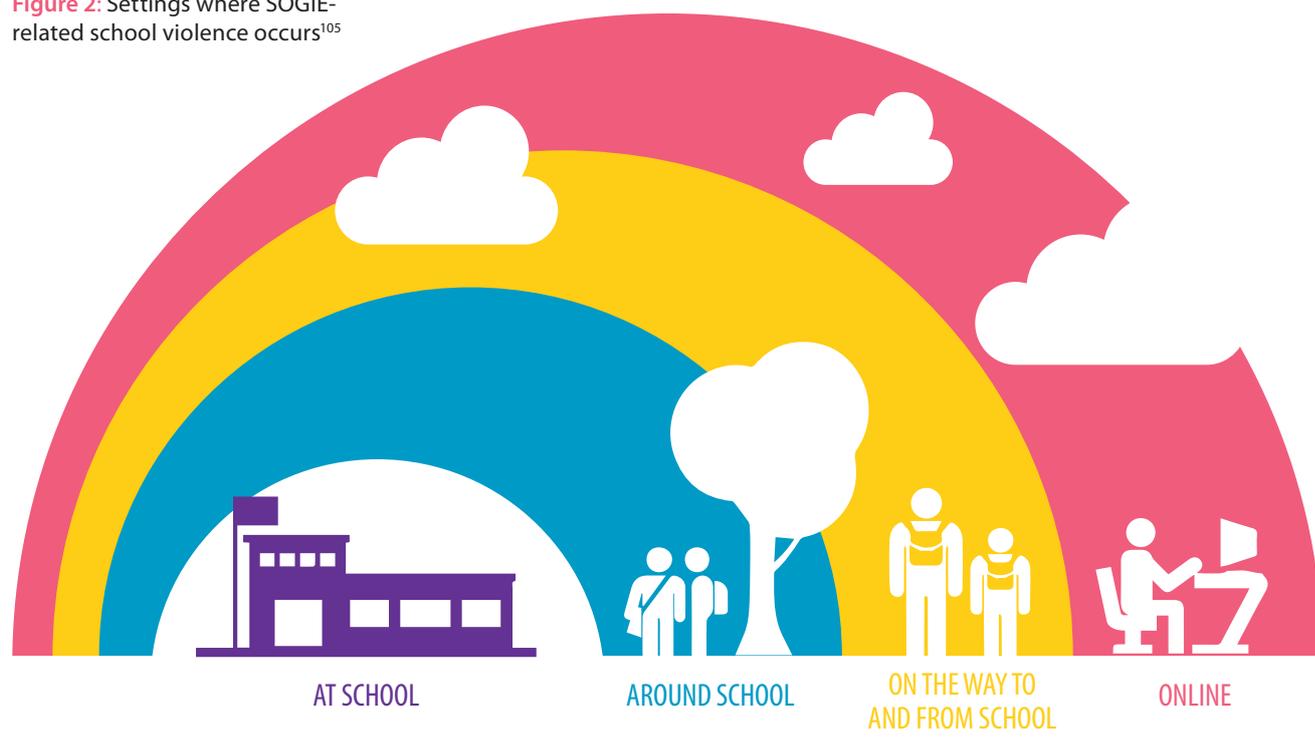
In addition, SOGIE-related school violence can also stem from everyday school practices, such as gender bias in school textbooks, curriculum and teaching practices, which reinforce rigid gender expectations and encourage harmful and unsafe practices and attitudes. This is referred to as institutionalised acts of gender-based and SOGIE-related school violence.^{56,57}

2.4 Where does SOGIE-related school violence occur?

SOGIE-related violence can take place anywhere in and around educational settings (see Figure 2); however, specific settings often prove more dangerous for students. Areas of specific concern within schools include bathrooms, hallways and classrooms, and in some settings, staff lodgings. Often, the risk of sexual, physical, verbal and psychosocial violence travelling to and/or from school is a reality for many children. Isolated facilities and inadequate supervision have been shown to magnify these risks.^{15,16,58,59}

While SOGIE-related school violence manifests in educational contexts, it does not exist in isolation; it is systemic in nature with root causes in all levels of a society. This makes it difficult to paint a complete picture of the landscape and dynamics of SOGIE-related school violence. This is particularly true in the Asia and the Pacific, which spans over 40 countries and includes a diverse array of cultures, religions, languages and sexualities. Although data on violence against children remains limited, often neglecting to explore the role of SOGIE, the evidence base of school-related violence broadly in Asia-Pacific is growing.^{18,60,61} The evidence that does exist, examined in the Literature Review in the following section of this report, provides insight into common forms and outcomes of SOGIE-related school violence in the region.

Figure 2: Settings where SOGIE-related school violence occurs¹⁰⁵





LỄ KHAI GIẢNG
NĂM HỌC 2015 - 2016
ĐƠN BẢNG CÔNG NHÂN
TRƯỜNG TIỂU HỌC SÁNH - QUẬN BÌNH THẠNH

3 Literature Review

SOGIE-related School Violence in the Asia-Pacific Region

“Research from many nations and regions consistently documents the high levels of verbal, physical and sexual harassment, violence, and violence experienced by young people in schools. Homophobia and gender-based bias also limit learners’ access to accurate information regarding health and sexuality, and diminishes the visibility of LGBTI people in other areas of the curriculum. Studies repeatedly confirm links between homophobic bullying and bias – including lack of access to accurate information regarding health, sexuality and other aspects of the curriculum – and negative social, educational and health outcomes.”⁹

UNESCO
*Rio Statement 2011 on
Homophobic Bullying
and Education for All*

Key Points

- Research literature suggests SOGIE-related school violence is highly prevalent in Asia-Pacific, although diverse legal and cultural contexts have impacted data collection in some countries
- SOGIE-related school violence has negative impacts on children’s education and wellbeing and is more frequent in schools without policy protection for LGBT students.
- Viet Nam lacked national research on the extent and impacts of SOGIE-related school violence.

3.1 Extent of SOGIE-related School Violence

There are diverse legal and cultural contexts around SOGIE issues in Asia-Pacific which likely have some impact on SOGIE-related school violence, as well as data collection on the topic. While historically many societies in Asia-Pacific recognized SOGIE diversity and were inclusive of LGBT people, research suggests that colonisation brought negative cultural attitudes and a legacy of punitive laws seen in some of the 19 countries that still outlaw male same-sex relations.⁵⁶ In some areas, Muslim Sharia and personal law also prohibit same-sex relations (such as parts of Indonesia and Malaysia).⁶² Legal prohibitions can also be applied against people with non-conforming gender identity and expression in some countries (for example, Brunei Darussalam and Sri Lanka).⁶³ Some Asia-Pacific States have outright opposed UN resolutions providing protection for SOGIE rights – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan and the Solomon Islands (China and India have abstained in previous votes).⁵⁶ Despite such differences between nations, research has suggested that SOGIE-related school violence might be widespread in Asia-Pacific broadly; even in the 18 Asia-Pacific States supporting related UN resolutions providing protection for SOGIE rights– Australia, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Japan, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, Nauru, Nepal, New Zealand, Palau, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.¹⁰

Estimates on bullying rates in Asia-Pacific research vary depending on the methodologies, which often focus on physical forms of bullying and overlook the roles of gender and sexuality.^{64,65} In 2014, a

comprehensive UNESCO review attempted to pull together existing evidence of SRGBV in schools in the Asia-Pacific region.⁵⁵ It found that violence is most commonly seen in the forms of, but not limited to, acts and threats of corporal punishment, physical violence, psychosocial violence, bullying including cyberbullying, and sexual violence. The study also credited five fundamental driving factors for the violence: gender inequalities and rigid gender expectations; societal norms, traditions and the acceptance of violence; disciplinary approaches within schools by parents, teachers and students; insecure or unsafe home and family environments; weak prevention or security mechanisms in communities.

The Global Student-based School Health Survey is the most recognised systematic study of bullying in the region. It highlights that bullying is a relatively common occurrence in many Asia-Pacific countries. In a recent global study on cyberbullying of 7,644 youth aged eight to 17 years in 25 countries (with approximately 300 respondents per country), the countries with the highest rates of online bullying were in Asia.⁶⁶ Specifically, 70% of participants from China had experienced online bullying and 58% from Singapore – students in both these contexts experienced more bullying online than offline. Further, 53% of participants from India, 33% from Malaysia, 26% from Pakistan and 17% from Japan reported online bullying.

A recent regional review found that the majority of LGBT students reported having experienced bullying, violence or discrimination.⁵⁶ Rates of peer victimisation among LGBT are higher than their non-LGBT peers, and victimisation appears to have a more profound effect. Verbal bullying is the most common, however psychosocial bullying such as exclusion is also prevalent, followed by physical bullying and sexual harassment.

Between 60-80% of LGBT youth have experienced SOGIE-related school violence in schools, although estimations for all groups can be hindered through issues of under-reporting.^{57,67-70} It is suggested that not conforming to gender norms of 'masculinity' and 'femininity', can make some self-identified LGBT students particularly vulnerable.⁵⁶ Gender discrimination and the lower status accorded to women and girls can intersect with homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in some settings to make lesbian, bisexual and transgender women particularly susceptible. The perpetrators of violence and discrimination based on SOGIE in schools are largely other learners; however, teachers and other education staff are also reportedly responsible for acts of violence and discrimination. Institutional level discrimination and exclusion are common, including misrepresentation in textbooks and curricula and an absence of gender-appropriate regulations and facilities. In many instances those targeted by violence and bullying do not seek help, as schools have insufficient support or response mechanisms to deal with these issues.⁵⁶

An Australian study of 3,134 LGBT students aged 14-21 showed a steady increase in SOGIE-related school violence in Australian schools over the past decade, which was attributed to backlash against the increased number of students declaring LGBT identities and some schools having a lack of policies against homophobia and other forms of bullying in school.⁷¹ Overall, 75% of LGBT students who were aware of policy-based protection against homophobia at school felt safe there (compared to 46% who said their school had no policy). Thus, there were links made between the extent of bullying and the school environment. Other Australian literature on 91 transgender students uncovered that transgender students were significantly more likely to have been rejected by family and to have suffered physical violence by peers (than lesbian, gay and bisexual students).²³ Australian literature on 272 people with intersex variations (born with biologically atypical sex characteristics) also showed this group experienced similar violence from students and staff.⁷² Similarly in New Zealand, while same-sex attracted students had more depressive symptoms than opposite-sex attracted students (32.3% compared to 9.5%), transgender students were faring worst of all – 40% had significant depressive symptoms and nearly half had self-harmed in the previous 12 months.⁷³

However, many countries in Asia-Pacific do not have prevalence data for SOGIE-related school violence, particularly where data collection opportunities have been impacted by conflict or various mobile populations, such as Bangladesh and Timor-Leste.^{74,75} Barriers to reporting and data collection have also included, for example, shame and stigma,^{76,77} financial barriers,⁷⁸ perceived impunity for perpetrators, and lack of awareness of or distrust of available supports.⁷⁰ In addition, many people do not report or seek care because they accept violence as normal or do not perceive it as worthy of intervention.⁷⁸

3.2 Impacts of SOGIE-related School Violence

SOGIE-related school violence can have long-term consequences for the children who experience it, whether they are 'actually' LGBT or simply perceived to be. In China, almost two-thirds (63%) of the LGBT young people from five provinces surveyed in a study reported negative impacts on psychological health from SOGIE-related school violence including symptoms of depression, loneliness and anxiety.⁷⁹ In a Japanese survey of same-sex attracted and transgender males, 71% had high levels of anxiety and 13% showed high levels of depression.⁸⁰ In Thailand, being bullied due to perceived LGBT status was associated with a higher risk of depression, unauthorised absence from school and unprotected sex.²⁴ In both the China and Thailand studies, students indicated living in fear of other students and experiencing anger and the desire for revenge, which could rarely be expressed due to their relatively decreased social power. Community-based research in Indonesia, Mongolia, Philippines and Viet Nam found high levels of self-stigma among young transgender people and men who have sex with men, and subsequent links to risk behaviours used as coping mechanisms such as increased substance abuse and unprotected sex.⁸¹ Transgender students often dropped out or were driven out of schools rigidly organised on gender norms, while those who remain in strongly gendered education settings can find their ability to concentrate on their studies severely compromised.⁵⁰

LGBT young people and those who are believed to be sexually and/or gender diverse were at increased risk of self-inflicted forms of violence including suicide, often as a consequence of the harassment and exclusion experienced in schools and in other settings. In the study in Thailand cited above, 7% of students who were bullied, due to actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, attempted suicide in the previous year. In the Japanese survey of same-sex and questioning males, one-fifth had self-harmed and almost a third had attempted suicide.⁸² In a 2014 survey of over 3,000 LGBT people in the Republic of Korea, nearly half (46%) of the LGBT respondents under the age of 18 reported having attempted suicide.⁸³ Overall, the evidence indicates that exposure to and experience of SOGIE-related school violence may impact a child's mental and physical wellbeing, education and health status.^{84,85} Further, there is data linking experiences of sexual violence to sexually transmitted infections including HIV and others.⁶⁹ There is also evidence that witnessing or experiencing violence as a child is linked to future acceptance of violence, either as a victim or a perpetrator, in future relationships including parenting. This is supported by research from the Asia-Pacific region, which has found that boys who are abused or witness violence are more likely to use violence in their relationships.^{16,86}

In Australia, new laws and policies ban discrimination and violence in schools on the basis of gender, gender expression and sexual orientation.^{72,87} The Australian study on 3,134 LGBT students uncovered links between state and school-level education policies against homophobia or SOGIE-related school violence, suicide risk and self-harm for same-sex attracted youth broadly.⁷² Specifically, 26% of LGBT students who were aware of policy-based protection against homophobia at their own school had self-harmed, compared to 39% whose school had no policy. Further, 13% of LGBT students who were aware of policy-based protection against homophobia had attempted suicide, compared to 22% whose school had no policy. Bisexual students were rarely directly mentioned in SOGIE-related interventions at the state or school level compared to gay and lesbian students, which contrasted

with the strong desire of bisexual students to avoid having their identities ignored.⁸⁸ Other Australian literature on 91 transgender students uncovered that transgender students were significantly more likely to leave school, to self-harm and to attempt suicide on the basis of SOGIE-related school violence (than cisgender/transgender and same-sex attracted peers).²³ Additionally, students with intersex variations had increased school drop-out rates.⁷³ However, in a study of 189 Australian transgender and gender diverse students aged 14-25, 62% reported that engaging in any kind of activism against transphobia (whether being allowed to give a speech at school about their story or joining a Facebook group against transphobia) improved their wellbeing.⁵² The next section considers the data available about SOGIE-related school violence in Viet Nam.

3.3 Need for a Viet Nam Study on SOGIE-related School Violence

Studies on SOGIE-related school violence have mainly stemmed from Europe, the Americas and Australia.^{72,89,90} There have been few studies on violence in Viet Nam schools. In 2013 the Global School-based Health Survey (GSHS) showed that approximately one in six students, aged 13-17 years, reported being in a physical fight one or more times during the last 12 months, with this behaviour being more common for boys (26%) than girls (10%).⁹¹ Reported experiences of bullying, one or more days within the last 30 days, were however similar for boys and girls (23% and 24% respectively).⁹² Other small scale studies have confirmed that (i) school violence is common; (ii) forms of violence among students include physical, psychological, sexual and social violence as well as bullying; and (iii) students with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity or expression are also reported to be targeted for violence.⁹³⁻⁹⁶

Viet Nam has also had some research studies about violence against LGBT students, including a field survey carried out by CCIHP with 520 LGBT people with the average age of 21.²¹ This study revealed that 41% of LGBT participants suffered from discrimination and violence in either schools or universities. Save the Children Vietnam and the Institute of Social and Medical Studies completed a separate study on 170 LGBT young adults which found that discrimination against these children (at home and school) contributed to their increased risk of homelessness.⁹⁷ They were at high risk of violence at home, school and on the streets. Only 15.9% of the LGBT youth participants had a post-secondary school education, 47.8% had only a lower secondary education, 27.6% had only a primary school education, and 8.7% had no schooling at all. Overall, 44% of those who had dropped out of school wanted to return, but without preventive measures in place to mediate and change school responses towards SOGIE-related school violence, these children will only continue to experience discrimination and violence upon returning to school. Without preventive measures in place to mediate SOGIE-related school violence and change school responses to LGBT students, these children will only continue to experience discrimination and violence upon returning to school.

One study conducted by the Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment (iSEE) involving 2,363 respondents from 63 provinces in Viet Nam found that one in three respondents felt that they had been subject to discrimination because of their sexual orientation and gender identity within 12 months preceding the survey, with a high degree of frequency.¹⁰⁶ The study also reported that transgender people experience the highest degree of discrimination. This study focused its analysis on the discrimination experienced by LGBT people in families, schools, workplaces, healthcare settings and housing, among other aspects. Looking specifically at the school setting, the study found that nearly a quarter of students had been harassed, bullied by teachers and/or school officials because they were considered to be LGBT. Gender indicative uniforms proved to be a significant obstacle for transgender people, affecting their quality of learning and their mental health. In light of the findings, some recommendations specific to the education sector included: 1) School psychological counseling models need to pre-empt the psychological and physical development of students to provide well-timed educational support; 2) Create



extracurricular programs that respond to the needs of students; 3) Respect students' choice of uniform to fit with their desired gender and; 4) Educate faculties about the LGBT community. One study conducted by the Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment (iSEE) involving 2,363 respondents from 63 provinces in Viet Nam found that one in three respondents felt that they had been subject to discrimination because of their sexual orientation and gender identity within 12 months preceding the survey, with a high degree of frequency.¹⁰⁶ The study also reported that transgender people experience the highest degree of discrimination. This study focused its analysis on the discrimination experienced by LGBT people in families, schools, workplaces, healthcare settings and housing, among other aspects. Looking specifically at the school setting, the study found that nearly a quarter of students had been harassed, bullied by teachers and/or school officials because they were considered to be LGBT. Gender indicative uniforms proved to be a significant obstacle for transgender people, affecting their quality of learning and their mental health. In light of the findings, some recommendations specific to the education sector included: 1) School psychological counselling models need to preempt the psychological and physical development of students to provide well-timed educational support; 2) Create extracurricular programs that respond to the needs of students; 3) Respect students' choice of uniform to fit with their desired gender and; 4) Educate faculties about the LGBT community.

Plan International Viet Nam, in cooperation with the Ha Noi Department of Education and Training (DOET), Center for Research and Applied Sciences in Gender, Family, Women and Adolescents (CSAGA), and the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW), has implemented a "Gender Responsive School Pilot Model project" meant to prevent and respond to SRGBV. The 3-year project (2014-2016), funded by UNTF and Plan International involves 20 secondary/high schools in Ha Noi. The intervention provides teacher training on gender equality, SRGBV, and reproductive health to encourage lessons on related topics to be integrated into the curriculum. The intervention also encourages the formation of youth leadership organizations and awareness-raising activities with parents. A key component of the project is the establishment of a psychological counselling room at the participating schools. To date, nearly 2,300 students have received individualized counselling and over 4,100 students have received group counselling. The project has found that while only 6% of students in Viet Nam know about a public hotline for counselling, 21% of the total students in the 20 schools of the project have sought counselling services.¹⁰⁷

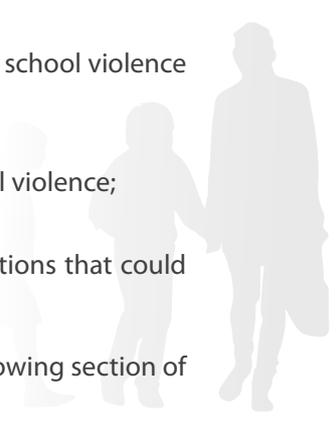
In Viet Nam, studies on SOGIE-related school violence are lacking and those that exist were limited to a single province. The number of participants in existing studies were generally few, and the target groups were not focused on school students. Therefore, more information is needed generally on the experiences of LGBT students in schools, and SOGIE-related school violence prevention and response approaches.

3.4 Research Objectives

The literature review therefore highlighted the need for a Viet Nam study with the following **research objectives**:

1. To gather information on the awareness and attitudes regarding SOGIE-related school violence for students, teachers, school administrators and parents;
2. To gather evidence on the nature and scale of violence against LGBT students;
3. To identify the main drivers or contributing factors toward SOGIE-related school violence;
4. To explore the impacts of violence for LGBT students;
5. To understand violence response measures in schools, and further effective actions that could contribute towards preventing SOGIE-related school violence.

Plainly, a multifaceted study was needed to achieve these research objectives. The following section of the report outlines the study's methodological stance and the methods used.





4 Methodology

“I did not know why I was beaten, but when they were beating me, they kept saying I was a gay, pervert or freak and other offensive words”

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) participant, student, North

“We should conduct field surveys to collect(...)opinions from different people, including students and teachers on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. Based on this, we will know where gender bias is most common and then try to provide further knowledge on LGBT.”

In-Depth Interview (IDI), School Administrator, North

Key Points

- A study was conducted on the nature and extent of SOGIE-related school violence in schools in North, Central and South Viet Nam. This study sat within a broader project exploring school-related gender-based violence, reported on elsewhere.
- Issues of consent and privacy for participants were carefully considered. Stakeholders were enabled to freely discuss the sensitive topic of SOGIE-related school violence due to the support of MOET. The research was aided by a range of LGBT community organisations, departmental and school contacts, and local and international research experts.
- The study applied an emancipatory methodology aiming to achieve social justice goals. Mixed methods of in-person and online surveys, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were used to collect data from four distinct groups of participants. These included general school students, LGBT students, school staff (including administrators and teachers) and parents.

4.1 Research Approach & Design

The study investigated violence among general secondary school students. It focused on all forms of violence that occurred in various contexts related to school including on school premises, the journey to and from school, and related locations. This included violence that may occur because of the perception that students were same-sex attracted or transgender (referred to in this report as violence related to being “LGBT” or “same-sex attracted” or “transgender”, or homophobic or transphobic violence), regardless of whether or not they were.

The research team used the **emancipatory theoretical approach**⁹⁸ – aiming to conduct research on, with and for the victims of violence, including LGBT students. We aimed to serve social justice goals and inform change in the tradition of emancipatory research for Vietnamese educational institutions and community (rather than simply to generate knowledge for its own sake). The reference group was particularly helpful in discussing our initial ideas about what those goals might be. The project was particularly geared towards topics relevant to institutional change that have emerged locally and internationally in recent years, and envisioning training and resource needs for schools and education stakeholders. In order to gather useful data for such ends, we ensured our methodological lens and specific methods/analyses were informed by:

- **A review of international and national research projects on violence** to create a comprehensive synthesis and analysis of scale, current status, causes, effects, impacts and preventive measures against violence in schools and communities.
- **Consultations with local and international experts** from different disciplines such as psychology, pedagogy, education management, sociology and LGBT studies.⁹⁹

Mixed qualitative and quantitative methods were used to achieve the research objectives on the awareness and attitudes of different stakeholders on violence, the prevalence, types and impact of violence on the students in the study sample, factors that were related to violence, as well as prevention and support mechanisms. Johnson has argued that a mixed methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative research is particularly useful for the purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration.¹⁰⁰ Further, quantitative data is broadly argued by theorists to offer weight and convincingness to qualitative stories and opinions, by emphasising frequencies of occurrence, dominance of themes, and/or popularity of certain perspectives.¹⁰¹ Quantitative data were collected from students aged 11-18 in schools studying in levels 6-12 of secondary education using a self-administered, paper-based survey. The same instrument was used in an online survey among self-identified LGBT students. Qualitative data were collected from students, teachers, parents and school administrators through in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs).

4.2 Study Sites & Timeline

The study was conducted in 6 provinces representing three regions of the country: North, Central and South. Provinces were randomly chosen, with two provinces selected to represent each region. Four participating schools were selected in each province including two lower-secondary schools and two upper secondary ones, including at least one urban school and one rural school for each learning level. The names of the provinces and the schools are not disclosed in this report to safeguard participants' privacy and confidentiality. The study was conducted from August 2014 to May 2015. The research team pre-tested the tools in January 2015 and the quantitative and qualitative data were collected from early February to late March 2015. Data cleaning and analysis of the qualitative and quantitative datasets were completed by the end of 2015.

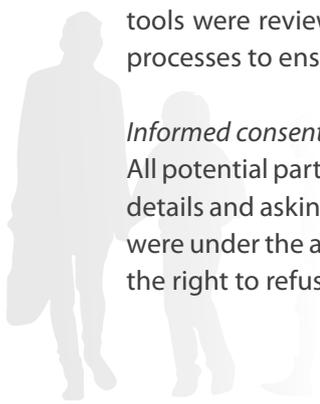
4.3 Ethical issues

Review and approval of research involving human subjects

There was no formal institutional review board (IRB) at the Vietnamese Institute of Educational Sciences, so this study has not been formally reviewed by an ethics board as per international practice on research involving human subjects. The instruments and methods used, however, draw on those used in a Mahidol University study in Thailand that had received IRB approval. Additionally, the research tools were reviewed by several departments within the MOET during the adaptation and refinement processes to ensure contextualization of language and content.

Informed consent

All potential participants were provided with a participant information document explaining the project details and asking these potential participants (or their parents, in the case where potential participants were under the age of 18) to express their consent to participate in the study in writing. Participants had the right to refuse to participate in the study.



Confidentiality & Privacy

Keeping data provided by participants confidential was an important aspect of the research. The research team safeguarded the confidentiality of the data collected in each school by not disclosing it to others in the school in a way that would have made it possible to identify who provided the data. Only the research team members, transcribers, and those working on this project at UNESCO had access to the IDI and FGD data. During FGDs and IDIs, the participants were allowed to choose between using their real names or pseudonyms. To ensure no leakage of personal information through other FGD participants, participants in the focus groups were also reminded to keep others' information confidential. None of the names of schools or any other identifying information have been included in this report. To ensure the privacy of LGBT students outside of the school sample, the location of the IDIs and FGDs were first selected by the students, and then communicated to the research team. The location for these events were often ones considered safe by the LGBT community such as community-based organizations like ICS along with the Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment (iSEE). Coffee shops were suggested by participants in the out-of-school qualitative data collection.

4.4 Quantitative Research

4.4.1 Design

To collect empirical data on the status, prevalence, scale, causes/drivers, and consequences of violence as well as interventions, the research team used a survey questionnaire. The survey was offered to potential participants through two modalities: on-site in schools and online (with data collection via the Internet used only to reach LGBT individuals of lower and upper secondary ages, who may not wish to access a survey in person for confidentiality). The questionnaire was developed on the basis of criteria that were linked to the research objectives. Separate sets of questions were developed for different groups of participants: students (including LGBT students), teachers, school administrators and parents.

The set of questionnaires was developed and finalised through:

- Seeking input/feedback from international and local experts on questionnaire format and content.
- Testing questionnaires with pilot participants from all groups to determine suitability and feasibility.
- Finalising the questionnaires based on the insights provided by experts and the piloting processes.

4.4.2 Data Collection Instruments

Survey Questionnaire

All three questionnaires comprised mainly closed (multiple-choice) questions in combination with some open (short answer) questions for adding/clarifying information. Specifically, the main questionnaire for students included the following themes:

- Demographic information;
- Awareness and attitudes on gender, violence and related issues;
- Experience being bullied;
- Experience witnessing violence;
- Experience committing violence;
- Consequences/impacts of SRGBV; and
- Existing SRGBV prevention and response programmes in schools and their effectiveness.

Questionnaires for teachers and parents followed the basic content of the students' questionnaire, but there were fewer questions for each topic, and supplementary questions on the demographics/professional lives of these participants.

Online Survey

To further support the on-site data collection, online data collection was used simultaneously for self-identified LGBT students of lower and upper secondary school age to ensure sufficient representation of their experience in the sample. The questionnaire for students was converted into an online format (using the Google Docs online survey application) and recruitment of participants was initiated by LGBT organizations through different web pages/forums and through network members. The benefits of online research included cost reduction and the increased comfort and security of respondents to discuss sensitive topics about violence and LGBT themes in contexts not controlled by school staff.

Sample

The sample for the quantitative data included students, teachers/administrators, and parents in six provinces representing North, Central and Southern Viet Nam. Students and parents were randomly selected with the coordination support of the Student Affairs Department under the Ministry of Education and Training. The selected list was sent to each school together with the Consent Forms to offer these individuals the chance to participate in the research.

All students in the list were given opportunities to read about the research and freely signed the Consent Forms before the research team came to the school for data collection. For teachers and administrators, invitation to participate was offered where there was minimum disruption to the teaching work planned. In total 3,698 people participated in the surveys (a full break down of participant demographics is supplied in the Results section of the report).

4.4.3 Data Collection Processes

In each province, the research team directly carried out the on-site survey at two schools (one lower secondary, one upper secondary), while the local Departments of Education and Training (DOETs) and Bureaux of Education and Training (BOETs) arranged the administration of the survey for the two remaining schools. These collaborators received full guidance from the research team for the administration of the surveys.

Participating schools assisted the research team to prepare the venue for data collection, and the communication with students and parents. While ensuring Consent Forms were signed off by students and parents was a new process for the host schools, and some staff did not thoroughly understand its purpose, explanations provided by the research team via telephone aided staff in understanding and completing this task to ensure participants were not coerced into participation. During data collection, the host schools did not interfere with the activities led by the research team.

Questionnaires prepared for different participant groups took place in different rooms of each participating school. These spaces generally included the school meeting hall, library, computer lab or classrooms. The school arranged sufficient tables and chairs in such a way to avoid discussion and ensure privacy during survey administration. Any inquiry or request for clarification raised by respondents was addressed directly by the research team members. Following the completion of the surveys, research team members and technical staff checked each completed questionnaire to ensure that all questions had been accurately completed.

The average time spent completing the questionnaire was 45-70 minutes (students) and 40-60 minutes (teachers, school administrators and parents). Lower secondary students and parents in rural areas often took more time to complete the questionnaire than their counterparts elsewhere.

4.4.4 Data Analysis

Data from the school-based surveys for students, teachers/administrators and parents were cleaned, entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and processed. The online survey data were processed separately, as respondents were identified from within the participating provinces but lived and studied in many different locations.

There were some questions/items students were allowed to skip/ignore as due to system issues. As some topics addressed in questionnaires were considered sensitive/unfamiliar for some students in schools, a small proportion of students have skipped some questions or items (random missing). In the processing of data collected, these two types of missing have been recognised and treated properly to ensure the final dataset is clean, sufficient and reliable.

4.5 Qualitative research

4.5.1 Design

The research team collected qualitative data to achieve a contextualised understanding of the situation in Vietnamese schools and in particular to better understand: the complexity of the causes, motives and impacts of SRGBV; measures, policies and activities to prevent or address the problem; and possible inputs into the recommendations. Qualitative data was collected through:

1. Semi-structured In-Depth Interviews (IDIs)
2. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Sample

Qualitative data were collected in 12 out of 24 participating schools or corresponding to two schools, one lower and one upper secondary school, per province.

Eighty-five (85) IDIs were conducted as follows:

Table 1: Composition of the IDIs

Participants	IDIs
Students	36
Teachers	12
Administrators	12
LGBT students in community	25
Total	85

All together 48 FGDs were convened with 280 persons (4-6 people/group):

Table 2: Composition of the FGDs

Participants	FGDs
Students	12 groups
Teachers	12 groups
LGBT students in community	12 groups
Parents	12 groups
Total	85



The selection of participants for FGDs and IDIs for the school sample was completed through the coordination and suggestion of key school contacts. In the 12 schools where qualitative data were collected, the researchers held in each school:

- 3 IDIs and 1 FGD with students;
- 2 IDIs with teachers and administrators,
- 1 FGD with teachers; and
- 1 FGD with parents.

The recruitment of LGBT students outside of the school sample was undertaken through LGBT networks, communities, and organizations active across the country. These included, for example, ICS and iSEE.¹⁰²

4.5.2 Data Collection Instruments and Processes

Each IDI/FGD was conducted by two research officers: one as main moderator and the other recording and providing technical support (e.g. supporting the recording and documentation, and ensuring a quiet atmosphere without outside interruption). All IDIs/FGDs began by getting acquainted, greetings, and creating a friendly and open atmosphere in the first few minutes between the research team members and participants. The research officers only started the IDI/FGD formally after the participants felt comfortable and understood and agreed with the proceedings (i.e. having signed the consent form and agreed to the use of a recorder).

Following the design of the FGD guidelines, the research officers chose one of two options to proceed. One way was to lead the participant directly into the issues of investigation by asking questions. The other was to use some supporting aids such as colour cards, sticky notes or drawings to assist participants to easily approach the issues under investigation. Due to time constraints, in most FGDs, the first option was used.

Upon the request of the research team, the venues for the IDI/FGDs with students, teachers and parents were arranged in private quiet places within the school such as libraries, computer labs and counselling rooms to create a comfortable environment. To increase the comfort of the participants, the IDI/FGDs with students at schools were often done by young research officers, whereas the IDI/FGDs with adults were carried out by more senior researchers. Most of the IDIs and FGDs took around 60-70 minutes to complete.

Following the same approach, the self-identified LGBT students participating in the IDIs and FGDs were given the option of proposing the time and venue, usually coffee shops and LGBT organizations to the research team to carry out the IDI/FGDs. Most of the IDIs and FGDs took around 60-80 minutes to complete.

4.5.3 Data Analysis

Each IDI/FGD session was transcribed, and read through in full repeatedly by different members of the research team. Each research member that read the transcript coded the transcript based on the research objectives (e.g. key topics) as well as on common themes and responses encountered during data collection (emergent topics). Discussions within the research team were then undertaken to review these stated and emergent themes, and then tabulated, so they could be read and understood in relation to the quantitative findings.

4.6 Research Limitations

The research presented several distinct limitations. Some of these include:

- *Generalisability of the data:* As the data were collected from 6 provinces, it does not represent the national scenario and its generalisability is limited. Despite this limitation, all efforts were taken to ensure representative sampling within the provinces and selected localities represent both urban and rural areas.
- *Discomfort with discussions of gender and violence:* This research explored topics considered 'sensitive' (such as violence and sexual matters) both in Vietnamese society in general and at school in particular. Despite carefully designed tools which had been piloted, the possibility that discomfort with the questions could have influenced the responses cannot be ruled out. Additionally, there may have been some concerns from schools that the data could potentially affect the reputation of the schools. MOET's support and encouragement was critical to secure schools' participation in communicating about the importance of valid and reliable data for action planning.
- *Quality of the research instruments:* Limitations on time and resources led to the simultaneous collection of both qualitative and quantitative research. As such, it was not possible to refine the one method based on data collected in the field by the other tool. This limitation was however somewhat overcome by ensuring pilot usage of all methods and instruments for all target groups before proceeding with the full research. Additional limitations were observed with the online survey, including challenges with responding to participants' queries in 'real time' and technical issues with skip questions. Future research using online instruments should consider how to address such limitations.
- *Categories used in data analysis:* There were some limitations to the use of categories in the study. Due to the complexity of young peoples' constructions of sexual and gender diversity which included but sometimes went beyond more widely accepted LGBT identity tropes, the LGBT category was defined by self-identification of traits and behaviours (including for example gender and sexual non-conformity beyond tradition notions of heterosexual males and females). Generally, it was therefore more useful to compare the LGBT group as a whole to male and female students, which could be seen as problematic, but where it was statistically significant male LGBT and female LGBT student group comparisons have been made.
- *Scope of the study:* As this a cross-sectional study, we can identify associations but not enable the establishment of causal relationships (e.g. the experience of bullying causing alcohol consumption). Additionally, the small number of respondents to the online survey (N=241) limits the complexity of statistical tests that could reliably be applied to this sample. Similarly, for the qualitative data collection outside of schools, the research team had limited recruitment networks to engage LGBT students. Community organizations were critical to expanding the scope of the networks, and in guiding the research team to ensure that respondents would feel comfortable discussing these issues with the researchers.





5 Findings

“At school, I was only happy when I had not come out (as a lesbian). After I did so, peers in school and class kept away from me and whispered among themselves, making me feel very sad. I decided to drop out of school. I did not talk with anybody nor have any trust in anybody.”

IDI, lesbian student, South

“LGBT sisters and brothers have been beaten, had their clothes ripped off and suffered from teasing. However, because teachers do not have a good understanding of that issue (LGBT), they just disseminate wrong information to our non-LGBT peers.”

IDI, gay male student, South

Key Points

- Evidence from the 3,698 study participants, and 365 FGD and IDI participants (students and LGBT students, school staff and parents) showed many school stakeholders were influenced by negative constructions of LGBT people.
- Stereotypes and prejudices (against gender non-conformity, femininity and perceived ‘weakness’) were among the factors motivating violence. SOGIE-related school violence was high in Viet Nam; 71% of LGBT students had been physically abused and 72.2% had been verbally abused.
- LGBT youth experienced clear negative academic and wellbeing outcomes, and almost a quarter of LGBT students who had experienced violence had also experienced suicidal ideation. The findings suggest an imperative need to raise awareness and build capacity for school administrators and teachers on SOGIE-related school violence in order to empower them to make schools safer spaces for LGBT students.

5.1 Participant Demographics

There were 3,698 participants in the quantitative part of the study, along with 365 participants in the qualitative part. The basic demographics for participants follow – divided into Student, LGBT Student, Staff (Teachers & Administrators) and Parent groups.

5.1.1 School-based Students

In total 2,636 students completed the survey, 12 groups of students contributed to the FGDs and 36 students gave IDIs. Student survey participants covered broad demographics. More than half (1,329) were lower secondary students, and the rest (1,307) were upper secondary students. Student participants included 1,170 males and 1,466 females. Students were aged between 11 and 18, with a mean age of 15.1 (only seven students were between 19 and 20). They were based in various locations; around a third of the group came from each of the North, Central and South Viet Nam regions. Approximately half were from urban areas, half were from rural areas. Overall 90% lived with both of their parents, under 7% with their mother, under 2% with their father, and a small number lived with other carers or alone. More than three-quarters of the group had no religion. A large portion of the group (over 80% of females and over 70% of males) rated their academic performance in the last term as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’. The vast majority (around 97% of females and 93% of males) rated their behaviour in the last term as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’. Overall, less than one-fifth of the students’ fathers or mothers were

university-educated (under one-tenth had no education at all). Male students reported having slightly less access to the internet (70% had access) than female students (76.2%). Less than one-tenth of students did not have a mobile phone.

LGBT Students in the school survey

To acquire data on sexuality and gender identity, the research team had to identify terms that would be understood by students in the survey instrument and that would be culturally appropriate within a Vietnamese school context. Students were not asked to self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender in the school questionnaire. Instead, they were asked about their sexual attractions and the preferred gender of their partner, as well as their level of gender-conformity on a scale of expectations related to masculinity and femininity. Students who responded that they were attracted to persons that were the same sex, both sexes or that they did not know, or identified themselves as gender non-conforming (being “less masculine than boys in general” or “less feminine than girls in general”) were categorised in this study as “LGBT” (N=755, or 28.6% of the sample). While someone with a gender nonconforming expression may or not be transgender, they are included in our analysis as LGBT. All other students were, for the purpose of the analysis in this report, labelled as male (N=905, 34.3%) and female (N=976, 37.0%).

5.1.2 Additional focused recruitment of LGBT Students

There were 241 self-identified LGBT students who participated in the online survey, and 12 groups of self-identified LGBT students contributed to the FGDs and 25 LGBT students gave IDIs outside of school (in community-based locations). Overall, there were few differences between the demographic information for the school-based student group and for the LGBT student survey respondents. There were no statistically significant differences to their location (37.5% North, 29.8% Central, 32.7% South) or rurality (52.3% urban, 47.7% rural); religion (79.2% had no religion); living arrangements (87.8% lived with their parents); academic performance (38.8% excellent, 37.9% good, 17.6% average, 5.1% weak, 7% poor) or behaviour at school (76.8% excellent, 17.5% good, 3.9% average, 1.7% weak). LGBT students in this sample were slightly more likely to be in upper secondary school (54.3%), and to state that their parents had been university-educated than (over a fifth of LGBT students reported this) compared to participants from the broader student group. We note that at times this report will discuss gay, bisexual and gender non-conforming male and transgender male-to-female (GBT) students as one group because they are often united in their experiences around violence and discrimination on the basis of certain kinds of bias against ‘feminine’ expressions on those assigned ‘male’ in Viet Nam’s culture. Accordingly, we sometimes also group lesbian, bisexual and gender non-conforming female and female-to-male (LBT) transgender students together for comparative purposes, which are specific to better understanding Viet Nam’s socio-cultural context.

5.1.3 Staff (Teachers & School Managers/Administrators)

The school staff participating in the study included 606 teachers and school managers/administrators who completed the survey, 12 groups of teachers who contributed to FGDs and 24 staff members who participated in IDIs. Staff survey respondents were mainly female (75.2%), and mostly married (87.4%). The vast majority had completed higher education training (82.8% had a Bachelor’s degree, 10.2% had a Master’s degree or higher). They represented a variety of school staff with different levels of career experience (6.3% had under 3 years of experience, 10.1% had 3-5 years, 16.9% had 6-9 years, 23% had 10-14 years, 19.2% had 15-20 years, 24.5% had over 20 years). Largely, participants reported having no religious affiliation (88.9%). The overwhelming majority owned or had access at home to a mobile phone (98.7%), computer (97.8%), television (96.3%), the internet (92.7%).

5.1.4 Parents

In total 215 parents responded to the survey, and 12 groups of parents completed FGDs. Parent survey participants represented various ages; the mean age was 43.4 years and the median was 44. Most parent survey respondents were female (68.8% female, 31.2% male), and the overwhelming majority were married (99.5%). Compared to the school staff group, they had a wider variety of education levels and fewer had completed higher education studies (9.4% primary or lower, 30% lower secondary, 31.9% upper secondary, 3.3% vocational, 25.4% Bachelor's degree or higher). The vast majority of parent respondents had home access to a mobile phone (98.6%) and a television (98.1%). However compared to the school staff group, fewer owned or had access at home to a computer (76.6%) or the internet (61%); one-tenth of the group owned a video game console.

5.2 Awareness of, and Attitudes to, SOGIE-related School Violence

5.2.1 Awareness of SOGIE-related School Violence

To uncover school stakeholder awareness of SOGIE-related school violence, FGDs and IDIs were carried out with students (including LGBT students), teachers and school managers, and parents. All participating focus groups were asked how they defined SOGIE-related school violence; however, none could clearly or comprehensively describe it – considering only one or some aspects of violence.

LGBT students presented stronger awareness of SOGIE-related school violence than other groups, most particularly verbal violence and its negative long-term effects. LGBT students repeatedly commented that verbal and psychological violence was the most frightening type of violence, while other students were more likely to frame violence as physical violence and teachers and parents were more likely to consider technology-related violence. The LGBT students explained that their fear of verbal/psychological violence was due to the threat it constituted to their mental health and wellbeing. Various LGBT students made similar comments including those who were lesbian – ‘I am most scared of psychological bullying because it would bring me down mentally’ (IDI, lesbian student, North); gay – For me the most threatening form of violence is mental violence because I am easily affected and sensitive. If I lose my control, I don't know what I would do’ (IDI, gay male student, North); and transgender – ‘I am more scared of psychological violence. It will be over in the case of physical violence, but psychological violence would gradually be absorbed into the brain and follow me in all activities I do’ (IDI, transgender male-to-female student, North). Part of the psychological threat of verbal violence for LGBT students was the use of discriminatory and scientifically inaccurate beliefs about their identities; a gay male student commented ‘The thing that hurts and offends me the most is when other people say LGBT is a disgusting disease’ (IDI, gay male student, Central). Verbal violence was also framed by LGBT students’ comments as their most commonly experienced type of violence; including verbal discrimination, being gossiped about and/or the subject of foul rumours. This often led to being avoided and suffering social isolation; one lesbian noted ‘When I told my dear friend that I am interested in girls, she started... keeping distance from me, heaping insults and negative actions against me’ (IDI, lesbian student, North); another said there were ‘a lot of negative gossips and rumours (about people like us) People have even insulted us as morbid and peculiar creatures’ (IDI, lesbian student, North). Some of the verbal violence for transgender people involved simply denying their identities altogether:

FGD, male-to-female transgender student, North

“I have suffered from (excessive teasing) many times in school because I am a transgender boy. Previously my appearance looks very much like a boy so I was stigmatised by peers who said that “you don't look like a girl even though you are a girl” and kept saying unkind things. Both friends and relatives thought I was homosexual by looking at my appearance. I think this is also a form of violence, coupled with other teasing activities done by stigmatising people.”



In rarer examples, some LGBT youth did not actually understand that the discrimination they experienced was a form of violence; ‘I have never experienced gender-based violent events, but only discriminatory incidents’ (IDI, gay male student, Central). However, most LGBT students overall understood that SOGIE-related verbal violence and discrimination was violence. Non-LGBT students were more likely to discuss SOGIE-related school violence (including physical, verbal and psychosocial violence) than parents and teachers, recalling how they had seen kids subjected to homophobia and cruel gender comments. ‘In my school, there is a boy who is often teased that way,’ said one student, ‘a male student, a bit sissy, weak and small, is frequently shoved and pushed down by other peers’ (IDI, lower secondary male student, South). A male upper-secondary student recalled a Grade 11 boy whom he said ‘looks like a girl, walks like a girl, and only plays with girls’. He discussed how this boy was teased by male students particularly, ‘being called “*pê-đê*” (a Vietnamese insulting term used to refer to gay men), or “*ái nam ái nữ*” (a Vietnamese insulting term used to refer to bisexual, homosexual, and transgender people)’ (IDI, upper secondary male student, Central). Contrasting with the student groups, parents and teachers did not comment on SOGIE-related school violence without prompting.

5.2.2 Attitudes to SOGIE-related School Violence

The majority of participants identified that calling someone harmful or discriminatory names (including homophobic names) is inappropriate, as seen in Figure 3. Parents most strongly disagreed (89%), followed by school staff (86.9%) and students (83.5%) with the statement that ‘calling someone with nickname like ‘*thằng béo*’ (fatty), ‘*pê đê*’ (derogatory word for gay), ‘*nhà quê*’ (country bumpkin), etc. is not offensive at all.’

There was less agreement on whether teasing gender non-conforming learners through verbal and other forms of abuse was inappropriate or appropriate (Figure 4). While the majority of all participants disagreed with the statement ‘teasing feminine male students or masculine female students is harmless’, school staff most strongly disagreed (84.9%), followed by parents (69.5%) and students (64.1%). Students seemed most unaware that this kind of teasing, which can be classed as SOGIE-related bullying and goes against protections on the basis of gender expression under the United Nations’ writing on human rights, was problematic. Teachers may be more aware of legislation in this area due to their strong educational background which may have increased their exposure to non-discriminatory thinking; however, this is not necessarily being passed on enough in their classrooms.

Figure 3
Agreement with the statement ‘Calling someone names like ‘thằng béo,’ pè đê,’ ‘nhà quê’ etc. is not offensive at all’ (N-Students=2,636; N-Teachers and School managers = 606; N-Parents = 215)

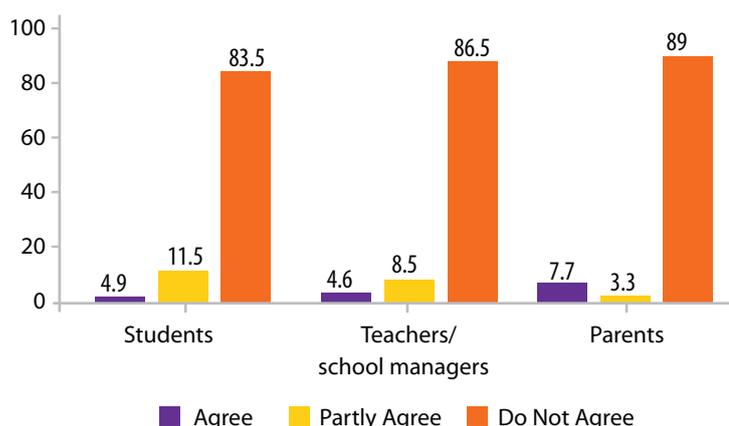
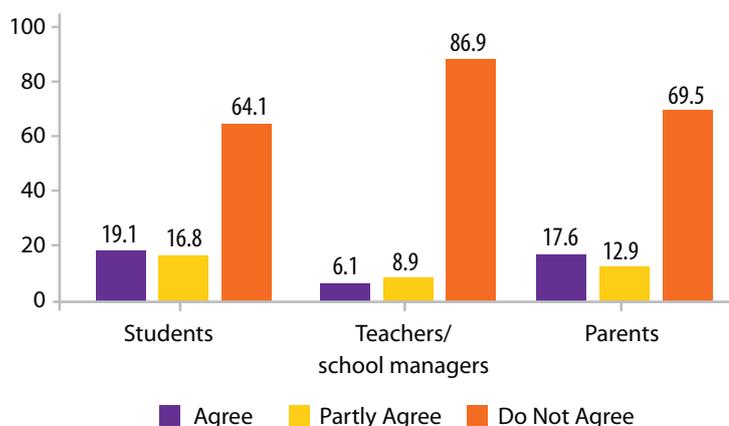


Figure 4
Agreement with the statement ‘Teasing feminine male students or masculine female students is harmless’ (N-Students=2,636; N-Teachers and School managers = 606; N-Parents = 215)



Some teachers described their LGBT and gender non-conforming students in a positive light, as talented and popular members of their classrooms. One said ‘LGBT children are very sociable with good communication skills and have skills in common activities. Teachers’ attitude on this is normal, because this is common now’ (IDI, youth union official teacher, upper secondary school, South). Another reflected, ‘They (LGBT students) study very well; they have their own personality; they are talented so they are often encouraged to participate in youth union activities’ (IDI, youth union official teacher, upper secondary school, South). One teacher even described appreciation of a popular male student with feminine characteristics who had a ‘good relationship with both male student friends and girlfriends since he is very hard working and talented’, and who could be relied on to contribute to class tasks through volunteering to help out, regardless of whether a task was considered ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ (FGD, teacher, lower secondary school, North). These affirming best-practice perspectives were not widely held, suggesting the need to be encouraged across school communities, so that gender-non-conforming and LGBT students can be accepted and even welcomed at school.

5.3 LGBT Students' Experiences of Violence

5.3.1 LGBT Students at Highest Risk of Violence

LGBT students were more exposed to violence in all forms than non-LGBT students according to data from statistical analysis of responses from 2,636 students on the forms of violence they had personally experienced. This was true for physical violence, verbal violence, social violence, sexual violence, and Internet/mobile devices-related violence. Specifically, the data in Table 3 shows that 71% of LGBT students had experienced physical violence, 72.2% verbal violence, 65.2% social violence, 26% sexual violence and 20% technology-related violence. A gay male student gave a shocking example, 'I was locked up in a room and beaten after having revealed my homosexual identity, as peers considered that people like me make school impure' (IDI, gay male student, Central). Another student commented on prolific verbal violence and sexual violence experienced by herself and other LGBT peers at her school:

LBT student,
North

"In my school, wherever I went, there was always a group of schoolmates who made negative comments about others and touched their body parts, even though we did not know each other."



Table 3: LGBT students' experiences of violence compared to non-LGBT students

	Male		Female		LGBT		p-value
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Physical violence	578	64.7%	495	51.1%	530	71.0%	.000***
Was slapped, shoved, hit, kicked, pinched, or had hair pulled.	427	47.4%	342	35.3%	362	48.1%	.000***
Was threatened with a weapon [e.g. scissors, knife, or gun].	76	8.4%	31	3.2%	80	10.6%	.000***
Was locked into a classroom, toilet, or some other room.	430	47.8%	345	35.4%	430	57.1%	.000***
Had belongings stolen, hidden or destroyed [e.g. shoes, books, mobile phones, money]	113	12.5%	72	7.4%	135	17.9%	.000***
Verbal violence	491	54.5%	507	51.9%	540	72.2%	.000***
Had money robbed or was extorted.	359	39.8%	337	34.7%	358	47.5%	.000***
Was insulted, heard insults against one's parents, imitated, subjected to sarcasm.	71	7.9%	42	4.3%	90	11.9%	.000***
Was verbally threatened.	316	35.0%	224	23.0%	276	36.7%	.000***
Was subjected to comments/stories aimed to humiliate, offend or ridicule.	280	31.0%	227	23.3%	321	42.7%	.000***
Psychosocial violence	492	54.7%	439	45.4%	488	65.2%	.000***
Was subjected to gossip, rumours, or bad talk behind one's back.	305	33.8%	335	34.3%	388	51.8%	.000***
Was boycotted against, isolated, banned, excluded from group or activity by students.	137	15.2%	169	17.3%	213	28.2%	.000***
Was given insulting, mean, disrespectful or unpleasant looks.	367	40.6%	403	41.3%	427	56.6%	.000***
Sexual violence	199	22.0%	103	10.6%	195	26.0%	.000***
Had one's skirt pulled up, one's pants taken down or one's shirt taken off.	133	14.7%	74	7.6%	134	17.8%	.000***
Was subjected to non-consensual touching of private parts.	113	12.5%	44	4.5%	126	16.7%	.000***
Was forced to have sex.	8	.9%	4	.4%	35	4.6%	.000***
Technology-related violence	119	13.2%	70	7.2%	151	20.0%	.000***
Was threatened, abused, or had a secret exposed or a story fabricated about oneself on the Internet or through a mobile phone.	48	5.3%	30	3.1%	67	8.9%	.000***
Had harmful photos or video clips spread about oneself on Internet or through mobile phone.	50	5.5%	21	2.2%	54	7.2%	.000***
Had messages or emails requesting unwanted sexual relations.	10	1.1%	14	1.4%	39	5.2%	.000***
Had 'identity' stolen, and fake personal information spread via the Internet.	58	6.4%	19	1.9%	74	9.8%	.000***

Note: * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

5.3.2 School Staff Can Spread Myths and Misinformation

Through FGDs and IDIs, **some LGBT students revealed that they had experienced situations in which schools staff contributed to violence through their misunderstanding of SOGIE-related themes.** Sometimes this violence was in the form of direct verbal homophobic discrimination and shaming. For example, a gay student commented, 'the teacher said I am a "pervert" in front of the class' (FGD, gay male student, South). A lesbian student said that in Grade 10 'a teacher in the school even convened my parents and asked them to reconfirm my gender identity' (FGD, lesbian, South). Another student explained:

FGD, LGBT student, South

"A small number of teachers have sympathy; others do not want us to be in their class (...) they often use unpleasant words and phrases. For example, the English language teacher uses words such as gay or pederast which are not written in textbooks but he still taught students, suggesting that you should all keep away from these people or you would be like them one day. When teaching a lesson on sexuality, the teacher of Biology subject said (gay) people lack male hormone or female hormone, then they need to go to Ho Chi Minh City for testosterone injections."

Another gay male student explained that the teacher of Citizenship Education at his school viewed homosexuality as a disease and advised gay students not to disclose their sexuality or crushes to anyone. When teaching about love, 'she said there is only love between male and female and any other kind of love is neither recognized nor accepted' (IDI, gay male student, South).

Transphobia could be expressed by teachers in more insidious, indirect ways, which appeared to be about re-asserting male or female norms, or disparaging the loss of some kind of traditional gender ideal. For example, a gender non-conforming student stated 'in one biology class, when seeing me go to the board for solving a problem, my teacher said: this society is full of chaos now' (FGD, gender-non-conforming student, South). A gender-non-conforming student recalled 'there was a time when we had an exam, one (exam supervisor) asked another (exam supervisor) whether I was a boy or a girl, then made me sit at the front desk and stared at me' (FGD, gender-non-conforming student, South). A male-to-female transgender student explained that parents were often called in to help correct transgender youth;

FGD, male-to-female transgender student, South

"In my class, teachers are very old-fashioned. I know for sure that I am a girl by appearance but inside me is a boy. When I did not follow their instructions, they called my parents to school to talk (...) Teachers view that issue (homosexuality, transgenderism) as something really disgusting."

One gender non-conforming female student recalled how recently when she was in Grade 10, her male mathematics teacher had pulled her up in front of the whole class to shame her for her masculine appearance and caused her deep humiliation. 'I felt that I was not respected. (The teacher) said that I was not a boy and wrote some nonsense on the board to illustrate. I was then extremely offended' (IDI, gender non-conforming female student, North). Another girl with a masculine appearance was confronted by a cleaner when she was entering the women's toilets.

IDI, gender non-conforming female student, North

"(The cleaner) slammed the toilet door and asked 'what are you doing here?' I told her that I needed to go to the toilet and she said 'you are a male student, why are you coming here?' 'I am a girl' I said. 'You are not normal, don't come here anymore' she said to me. That was the first time I cried because of this."



The LGBT students interviewed often argued that violence from school staff occurred because most staff saw them as abnormal, or even as suffering from some kind of disease. One girl reflected, ‘Teachers said that these students (i.e. LGBT like us) look as if they were autistic and did not get along well with other people’ (IDI, bisexual female student, North). A gay male student commented that ‘The Grade 9 female teacher said I had contracted a disease and asked my dad to send me to hospital for a medical diagnosis’ (FGD, gay male student, Central). Another gay male recalled:

FGD, gay male student, South : *“(Despite my) outstanding academic results at school, my homeroom teacher contacted other subject teachers, suggesting that they should pay more attention to me to help me out because I was “off track” (...) Another teacher told me that being homosexual is really miserable and suggested that one would have to change my gender (...) She said that she would see the kind of food I ate, suggesting that I should eat estrogen-blocking foods to reduce estrogen levels (only then could I get back to normal).”*

Teachers sometimes actively sought to change LGBT students, not realising the harm this caused. A gay male student said ‘the homeroom teacher knew that I had been beaten because I am a bit abnormal, she advised me to become a normal person’ (FGD, gay male student, South); a lesbian student commented ‘students were all requested to put on long dress. I did not put it on; then the school blamed me and called my parents...asking why my mom let me look like a boy’ (IDI, lesbian student, South). There were also cases where teachers reportedly treated LGBT students so poorly, lacking the understanding or skills on how to treat them with support, that LGBT students needed to leave the school:

IDI, upper secondary male student, Central : *“At the beginning of our Grade 10, there was a girl, she was a temporary class monitor. By that time we realized that she was very fond of other girls. None of our classmates said anything but a teacher did. She hated her and asked her to do more difficult tests. Her parents have taken actions but the more they did the more the teacher hated her. That teacher even requested the class head teacher to withdraw her class monitorship(...) Later, that student had to move to another school.”*

Occasionally parents discussed their disappointment in teachers who swore at, shamed or hit students; for example one parent said, ‘Teachers without tenderness indirectly enable violence...teachers should set good examples for students’ (FGD, parent, upper secondary school, North). However **parents did not specifically reproach teachers for their SOGIE-related school violence.** This appeared to leave LGBT students mostly alone in an intrinsically unequal battle with (the inherently more powerful adult) school staff. Without the support of parents, it seems that many LGBT students will continue facing violence at school until the schools themselves actively intervene.

5.3.3 LGBT Students Suffered the Most Violence

In order to understand the rate of student groups who had suffered violence in the last six months (at the time of the survey), the survey results obtained from LGBT and non-LGBT students were compared. The comparison showed that **the highest frequency of violence in the last six months was experienced by LGBT students, and this applied to both males and females** (Table 4). This difference is highly significant in statistical terms ($p=0.000$). Poignantly gay, bisexual and gender non-conforming male and male-to-female transgender (GBT) students suffered the greatest amount of all forms of violence in the last six months.

Table 4: Types of violence experienced by LGBT and non-LGBT students in the last six month

Have suffered violence in the last 6 months	LGBT								p-value
	Male		Female		Male		Female		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Physical violence	365	41.0%	266	27.7%	147	56.5%	176	36.3%	.000***
Verbal violence	282	31.7%	236	24.6%	126	48.6%	161	33.3%	.000***
Psychosocial violence	293	33.0%	288	30.1%	132	50.8%	187	38.9%	.000***
Sexual violence	114	12.8%	50	5.2%	90	34.6%	49	10.2%	.000***
Technology-related violence	65	7.3%	37	3.8%	53	20.4%	39	8.1%	.000***

Note: * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Physical violence had concerningly been experienced by 56.5% (over half) of GBT students and 36.3% (over a third) of LBT students in the last six months (compared to 41% of males and 27.7% of females from the non-LGBT group). The LGBT students mentioned many types of physical violence such as being hit with hands, feet and/or legs, having objects or weapons thrown at or used on their body, being confined in a certain room, and other experiences such being touched in their private parts for so-called “sex checks”. Parents discussed their children being hit or kicked. A gay male student stated:

Gay male student, Central

“I was pushed into a locked room and beaten (when I came out to them about my true sexuality) with the reason (given for my beating) being that “students like me would harm the school’s image.”

Male on male physical violence was explained as related to the assertion of male gender norms; a male student commented ‘physical violence happens more often to male students as they do not like talking and usually prefer solving disputes by physical strength’ (IDI, lower secondary male student, North). Physical violence did not always occur on campus, as the below example demonstrates. Also, while GBT were most likely to experience this type of violence, those males who were suspected of being GBT could also suffer physical violence. For example, one male student did not know why he was considered gay even though he was not, but knew that boys who beat him ‘kept saying I was gay’ (FGD, lower secondary male student, North).



Verbal violence was reported by 48.6% (almost half) of male GBT students versus 33.3% (a third) of LBT students in the last six months (compared to under a third of students generally). LGBT students who participated in FGDs and IDIs said that verbal violence often happened under the forms of name-calling and ridiculing, and use of foul terms and language. A range of cruel words were used according to the students; most commonly LGBT students mentioned being called a “pervert” and other terms less recognizable to adults as homophobic or transphobic slurs when used due to differences in slang between older and younger generations. For males these derogatory slang terms included ‘pê-đê’, ‘bóng kin’, and ‘bóng lờ’. For females, slang terms included:

‘ô môi’ or simply ‘les’ for lesbian (see glossary for more information). Comments about gender were also used both for any LGBT students (regardless of whether or not they were transgender) showing students’ misunderstandings about the relationship between one’s sex, gender and sexuality. One gay male student recalled, ‘schoolmates call me ‘pê đê’ (derogatory term for being gay), because according to them, I walk like a girl’ (IDI, lower secondary gay male student, South). A gender non-conforming student said ‘when I went home from school, a group of young people riding their motorbikes approached and beat me, scolding me and calling me a gay, a pervert’ (FGD, gender non-conforming student, North). Teachers and parents sometimes expressed their belief that such incidents were quite prevalent in schools – one principal said ‘verbal violence does occur frequently in schools’ (IDI, administrator, South), for example. In spite of that, some teachers and parents considered this just a sort of “foul language” between students and not a form of violence. For example, one teacher said ‘Once I came across some students...heaping “bad words” on each other (so I) reminded them about the student code’ (IDI, lower secondary administrator, Central). A parent commented, ‘Female students just have a habit of bad-mouthing about or slander each other’ (FGD, upper secondary parent, South). Considering this was the form of violence LGBT students feared most, adults often took too casual an approach to it, seeing this common youthful behaviors rather than deeper bias.

Psychosocial violence was endured by around half (50.8%) of male GBT students compared to 38.9% of LBT students in the last six months (compared to under a third of students generally). This violence exists in schools in various forms, such as psychosocial exclusion, isolation, being excluded from a group, being ignored. The students in FGDs and IDIs acknowledged that these forms of violence had happened in schools. Nevertheless, both parent and teacher groups did not explicitly mention this form of violence. An LGBT student explained that students who got excluded at their school particularly included ‘girlish boys’ (IDI, LGBT student, Central). A gay male upper secondary student reflected that after his gay identity was known to his peers and school staff, he became relatively isolated:

IDI, gay male
upper secondary
student, South

“Most of them looked at me in an unfriendly way (...) some others stayed indifferent, and most of them did not have positive attitude toward me. The latter group often did unfriendly things such as teasing, bullying, looking at me badly.”

Sometimes isolation occurred in communal spaces such as classrooms, bathrooms or changing rooms where the LGBT student would be falsely accused of potentially attacking others (showing sexual interest or stalking) despite their goal of simply going about their day. For example, some lesbians discussed being targeted for social exclusion in girls’ bathrooms: one commented that when she went to the toilet girls would run in and out of the bathrooms telling everybody ‘oh, this girl is a lesbian, don’t come in there or she would stare at our (bodies)’ (IDI, lesbian upper secondary student, South). In many such examples, LGBT people were subtly victimized by being first cast as villains on false grounds, and then excluded.

Sexual violence was suffered by over a third of GBT students (compared to around one-tenth of LBT students, 13% of male students and less than 7% of female students in the non-LGBT group). This was a highly significant difference that put GBT at particular risk compared to the other groups. Most of the cases of sexual violence were related to being spied on in the toilets or having one’s pants pulled down and one’s private parts publicly exposed. There were also several incidents of perpetrators taking exposing/sexual photos of others without permission, and uploading them to the Internet. Males were frequently perpetrators. Some males recounted incidents of sexual violence perpetrated by other boys they knew which they felt unable to stop, for example: ‘When I was studying in Grade 7, some classmates (male peers) took off my shirt and pulled my pants down...and laughed at me (IDI, upper secondary male student, South). One student discussed having their private parts repeatedly touched by groups of students against their will at their school:

FGD, LBT
student, North

"In school, when I went anywhere there stood a group of students to comment, judge and touch different body parts, even among people I didn't know. I didn't understand why they talked about me like that. I had never met or talked to them before but they still judged me negatively."

Many of the LGBT students who had been sexually abused by peers did not know how to stop it and did not receive help from bystanders. It may be useful for all students to learn skills to respond to their peers' behaviours, both in self-defence and to defend others.



Technology-related violence was experienced by one-fifth of LGBT male students (compared to 8.1% of LGBT female students, 7.3% of Non-LGBT males and 3.8% of females). Participating students, teachers and parents all pointed out that this type of violence had happened in school, in such forms as bad mouthing online or through mobile phone texts, spreading bad rumours and expressing negative comments on Facebook pages. Students explained 'some peers post on Facebook to ridicule the others ... or use fake accounts on Facebook to raise and/or pass on bad rumours against others' (FGD, female student, upper secondary school, North). Some conflicts originated on Facebook and then led to violence in the real world 'a group of students in grade 7 had some kind of argument on Facebook. At first they confronted each other to talk about it and later, they met in a deserted

place and ended up fighting' (IDI, male student, lower secondary school, South). A transgender student explained how she had been excluded from a dance team she had led, after 'someone stated on Facebook that it is unacceptable to have a transgender as team leader' (IDI, male-to-female transgender student, Central). However, this type of violence was perhaps less prevalent than parents and teachers appeared to assume (according to the earlier data on their awareness of violence) and no participants talked about the positive possibilities of the internet in addressing violence or specifically helping SOGIE-related bias or LGBT students as it has been seen to elsewhere.⁴⁰ Despite its flaws, technology looks set to stay, so more positive practices around its use need to be explored and taught.

5.4 LGBT Students' Perceived School Safety

5.4.1 LGBT Students' Perception of School Safety

Data from the surveys (see Table 5) showed that LGBT students were less likely to assess their school as a safe space (only 72.7% did so), compared to non-LGBT male (75.8%) and female (78.1%) students. The relationship was statistically significant. This appeared to reflect the data on violence, which showed LGBT students to be most at risk of violence of all kinds, and GBT to be more at risk than any other group considered. The survey results showed that LGBT students have also worried about being abused by other students more than non-LGBT male and female students. LGBT students additionally worried the most (16.5% were worried) about being abused by school staff. Proportions of non-LGBT male and female students who have worried about this were equally lower (at 11.4%). One LGBT student discussed their feelings of danger at school also impacted their experience of homework:

FGD, LGBT student, Central

“I was scared of being beaten because it hurt me. When it comes to psychological violence, occasionally I forgot about how to behave myself by reacting excessively. Then, they started to look at me and pay attention to me. Back home, I just kept thinking about that and felt frightened, making it quite difficult to focus on learning at home.”

Table 5: Students’ assessments of their safety at school

	Male		Female		LGBT		p-value
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Level of school safety adequate	663	75.6%	742	78.1%	536	72.7%	0.038*
Worried about being abused by schoolmates	234	26.7%	303	31.9%	244	33.1%	0.011*
Worried about being abused by teachers	99	11.4%	108	11.4%	121	16.5%	0.000

Note: * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

5.4.2 Unsafe Locations for LGBT Students Within & Beyond Schools

Within schools, there are places that students consider the most unsafe, especially toilet areas or places located far from the offices of the school managers and teachers, or places with no monitoring equipment. The most unsafe places in schools according to many LGBT students were the school toilets and changing rooms. Many same-sex attracted boys and girls described how peers treated them as if they were sexually aggressive when they were simply trying to use the toilets, and so toilets became a location either of social exclusion or judgement. For example, one gay male student reported ‘when I used the toilet, my friends did not dare to come in (as if I were going to attack them). I thought they were afraid of me’ (FGD, gay male upper secondary student, Central). A lesbian similarly commented, ‘when I went to the toilet, girls stared at me as if I were a monster’ (FGD, lesbian upper secondary student, Central).

Toilets and changing rooms were also a high risk area for transgender students or those who were non-conforming in their gender expression, as these were sites where they had to navigate expectations for how they looked or what their sex category was. Many individuals described being chased out of toilets or changing rooms because their gender expression was non-conforming, for example, a female student who was often called a ‘tomboy’ by her friends reported:

FGD, lower female gender non-conforming secondary student

“There was one time I entered the female toilet, some peers saw me and said: ‘hey, this is the female toilet; the male toilet is on the other side’. Very often, I looked back and forth (to check nobody was around) and then just jumped into the male toilet.”

Focus groups and interviews with groups of teachers/administrators, parents and non-LGBT students also identified that violence happened in areas beyond the school grounds including, for example, in the school hall, areas behind schools, in canteen lines, at the area surrounding the front school gate, behind the school, in local public areas or on the trip from or to home. Non-LGBT students generally offered reasons for why toilet blocks were considered dangerous including that they were rarely monitored by staff; ‘toilet areas are the most unsafe areas as students often fight there (...) and teachers do not go there so often (FGD, upper secondary student, South). However, many LGBT students in the FGDs and IDIs suggested that the issue with violence in gendered spaces such as toilets and changing rooms went beyond the problem that they were simply located away from staff or were less frequently monitored. LGBT students particularly argued that these spaces were key sites for danger to LGBT people because they were locations segregated by sex and thus where people felt ‘vulnerable’ to those



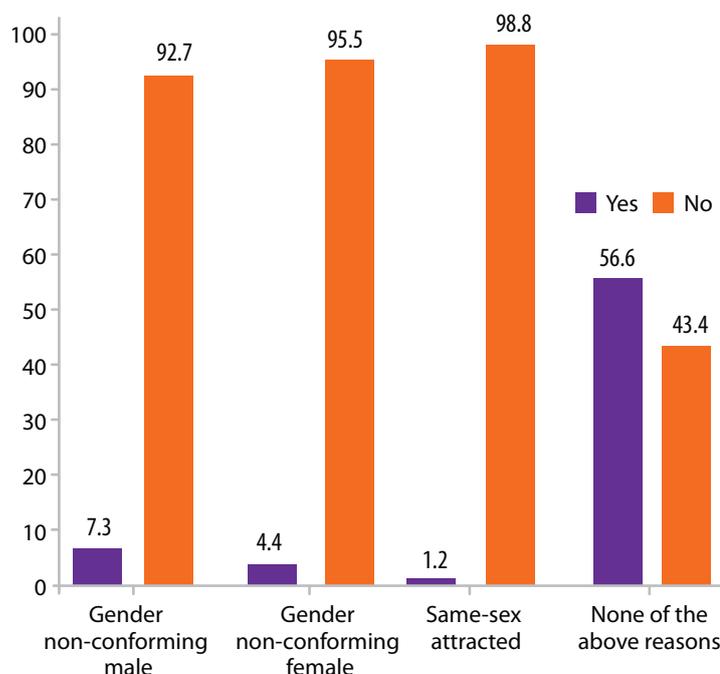
who presented their gender differently. To ensure equity, LGBT students often said there should be gender-neutral toilets (as successfully used by many students in a city school), so that they and other students could avoid the very difficult to discuss problem of being gender-policed, humiliated by cruel taunts, or prevented from using gendered toilets when they needed to relieve themselves (as how somebody looks, or who they are attracted to, would no longer be a reason for exclusion from such toilets – which would simply be places one relieved oneself).

5.5 Perceived Motivations Behind SRGBV

5.5.1 Punishing ‘Feminine’ Transgressions on GBT Bodies

Perpetrators of violence were asked about their motivations. Figure 5 shows that 12.9% of perpetrators directly admitted that they were motivated by their other students’ deviation from gender stereotypes in terms of masculinity, femininity or sexual orientation. Students were more likely to admit that they inflicted violence on a boy who seemed feminine (7.3%) than a masculine girl (4.4%); or somebody who had feelings for individuals of the same sex (1.2%).

Figure 5
Student perpetrators’ reported motivations for their violence against peers
(N-Students = 659)



The qualitative data (and data about who was subjected to violence most often) contrastingly all suggested that violence on the basis of gender was far more common than perpetrators admitted, and confirmed that violence was far more likely to occur against male students who had feminine expressions or among gay, bisexual and gender non-conforming male and male-to-female transgender students (GBT). Students explained; ‘girl-like boys are teased more often since they seem weak like girls’ (FGD, lower secondary student, Central). Boys who wore flamboyant and colorful clothes particularly experienced this kind of response. A student considered an ostracised peer: ‘He is fashionable with ear piercing, finger rings and laces. He speaks like a girl. He often hangs out with females. The classmates do not play with him’ (FGD, male upper secondary student, North).

5.5.2 Respect for ‘Masculine’ Expressions on LBT Bodies

The qualitative data repeatedly showed that female students who had expressions associated with ‘masculine’ gender stereotypes of strength or leadership and those that were lesbian, bisexual and gender non-conforming female or female-to-male transgender (LBT) students experienced

comparatively more respect. One student made this typical comment; ‘Often (feminine or gay) male students are more frequently stigmatized and scorned (...) Tomboyish lesbians are only regarded as slightly manlike’ (FGD, GBT student, Central). Another student said ‘There are girls who seem masculine but they are liked by many others, while girl-like boys tend to be disliked’ (IDI, upper secondary male student, North). A lesbian student agreed ‘More often than not, gay (homosexual males) and trans (transgender) are victims of violence. Homosexual females are usually strong and hard to bully’ (FGD, lesbian student, Central). Masculinity thus functioned as a protective device against bullying and a means to respect and social opportunity for some LBT students.

5.6 Responses to SOGIE-related School Violence

5.6.1 LGBT Students’ Responses to Violence

The surveys and interviews with all stakeholder groups included questions on the reactions of victims and witnesses of SOGIE-related school violence. Of the options provided, the student victims of violence surveyed were most likely to report that they responded by seeking assistance from adults – 29.3% of LGBT students had this response. Figure 6 shows that of seven options, ‘Doing nothing/keeping silent’ was the second most popular option – and particularly more popular with LGBT students (18.7% of the LGBT student victims chose this option, compared to 13.8% of the in the non-LGBT group). Some non-LGBT male and LBT female students particularly chose to ‘fight back fiercely’. Less popular options included seeking out a group’s assistance to get revenge, calling a hotline for help, being scared/begging and lastly, attempting to compromise with perpetrators by buying protection through money or gifts. The information collected from IDIs and FGDs with students affirmed these findings and suggested silence was often seen as a viable option because students felt that if they reported violence, their attacker may take revenge.

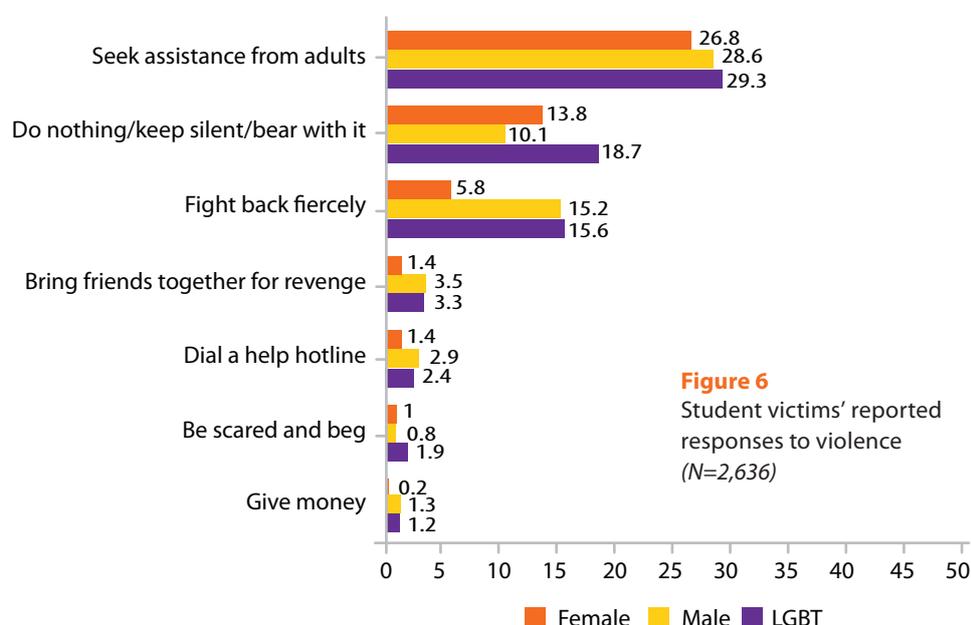
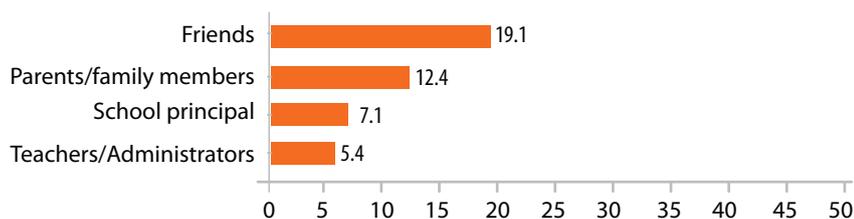


Figure 6
Student victims’ reported responses to violence
(N=2,636)

5.6.2 LGBT Students' Assistance-seeking Attempts

To understand who student victims of violence sought help from in the survey, we provided a question offering a list of key people in their lives whom they might turn to. Of the options provided, Figure 7 shows that the LGBT student victims of violence surveyed online were most likely to report that they sought assistance from friends – nearly one-fifth (19.1%) sought their friends' aid (compared to around one-tenth of non-LGBT students). They were less likely than the non-LGBT group to report to school staff (12.5% including teachers/administrators – 5.4%, and principals – 7.1%; compared to 17.7% for non-LGBT students including teachers/administrators – 14.8%, and principals – 2.9%) or parents and members of their family (12.4% compared to 16.9% for non-LGBT students).

Figure 7: Key people LGBT student victims reported seeking assistance from (LGBT online survey, N=241)



This showed there was a sense that LGBT students had less support from adults at home and at school than the non-LGBT students. The interviews and discussions moreover suggested that LGBT students, who appeared to experience increased violence, felt less convinced that adults would offer them assistance, safety or support. One LGBT student commented 'I rarely share my concerns with teachers' (FGD, LGBT student, North) for example, while another explained that instead of reporting to parents or teachers, LGBT respondents express more trust in peers – 'I have never tried to meet my teacher to share personal matters with her. I just share them with peers' (IDI, lesbian student, Central). A bisexual female student argued that teachers would not likely respond in a supportive manner to LGBT students' requests for help, and that she personally had not yet met a teacher whom she believed would care about her experiences of violence:

IDI, bisexual female student, North

"There was one time I thought that if I confided in my teacher, she would be able to understand me! But then I thought about it again and realised that my teacher would not act according to my expectations. So I decided not to reach out. In fact, I am a reserved and shy person, perhaps because there has been no teacher who is caring enough for me to share my concerns and thoughts with."

This showed that without strong educational messaging, policies and campaigns on the creation of safe schools for LGBT students, many students had little faith that SOGIE-related school violence could be prevented.

5.6.3 Student Bystanders' Responses to SOGIE-related School Violence

To understand the responses of student bystanders of violence broadly in the survey, we provided a question inquiring into their reactions to the violence they witnessed. Of the options provided, Table 6 shows that the students surveyed who witnessed violent behaviours were most likely to report that they called on teachers/staff in their school for aid (just over one-fifth did so), tried to prevent the violent behaviours (just under one-fifth did so), or did nothing – an only slightly less popular option, more likely to be chosen by LGBT students. Bystanders intervening in SOGIE-related school violence were particularly less common according to the focus group and interview data. Teachers/administrators saw student bystanders doing little and only a few intervening: in a typical example one teacher stated 'most bystanders watched and even encouraged the attack. Only some peers said that one should not tease (LGBT) students like that' (FGD, upper secondary teacher, Central).

Table 6: Reactions by student bystanders

	Male		Female		LGBT		p-value
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Do nothing	161	17.9%	161	16.6%	156	20.7%	0.086
Try to prevent them	184	20.5%	177	18.2%	147	19.5%	Not sig
Encourage them	18	2.0%	7	0.7%	19	2.5%	0.010*
Support victim	105	11.7%	95	9.8%	112	14.8%	0.005**
Call teachers/staff in school	204	22.7%	217	22.3%	173	22.9%	Not sig
Tell parents	78	8.7%	129	13.3%	106	14.1%	0.001***
Tell friends	75	8.3%	103	10.6%	109	14.5%	0.000***
Dial the help hotline	21	2.3%	32	3.3%	35	4.6%	0.035*

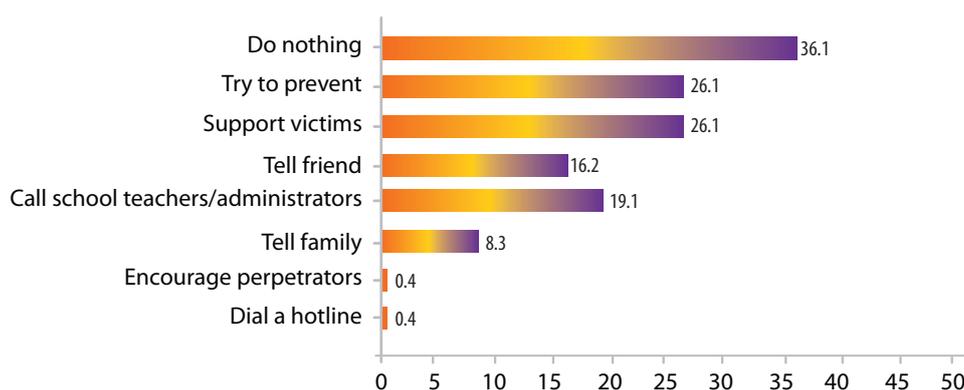
Note: * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

LGBT students in the online survey revealed that they were most likely overall to do nothing when they saw violence (36.1%), intervene (26.1%), support the victim (26.1%), or tell their friend (16.2%; see Figure 6). They were much less likely than the broader student population to tell adults such as teachers or their family, which again may reveal their lack of faith in adults (or indeed many people) as reliable allies who would intervene. Sadly, LGBT students also confirmed that when they themselves were teased and or bullied, very few peers dared to defend them, interfere in or prevent the incidents, especially for physical violence. A gay male student commented ‘students intervene if the victim is a friend; if not, they just witness as bystanders’ (IDI, gay male student, North); another LGBT student said ‘my close friends are willing to include me in theory but refrain from interfering if I am physically attacked’ (FGD, LGBT student, North). According to the LGBT students, some students just witnessed violence against LGBT students without interfering since they saw the incidents as normal teasing that occurs every day and felt no genuine concern over homophobic or transphobic violence. A student stated that when they were bullied and beaten ‘nobody came to intervene... people thought that it was simply a normal encounter, so they did not interfere’ (FGD, LGBT student, Central). As a lower secondary student in Grade seven and eight, one female bisexual student had chalk thrown at her and chalk powder repeatedly dumped on top of her head, and nobody ever spoke up for her or stood near her:

IDI, bisexual female student, North

“At most, some female friends who felt sorry for me came to give me a handkerchief to clean my face. No one dared to stand by me. By the way, those things happened on a daily basis. Such childish things as teasing or trampling on a school bag, ordering me to leave my seat, so on and so forth became part of my daily life which I had to accept.”

Figure 8: Response by LGBT student bystanders to violent incidents (LGBT online survey, N=241)



The indifference towards bullying behaviours against LGBT students also arose from the fear of being presumed to be an LGBT person like the victims if they defended them. For example, one boy said that when he was teased or bullied, if somebody intervened and told the perpetrator to stop their actions, the perpetrator would likely say to him/her 'Are you also gay?' He reflected that 'because they were afraid of being teased, they refrained from intervening' (IDI, GBT, North). Not only watching with indifference, bystanders of violence sometimes cheered or even joined in the attack: one female student explained that this could be to avoid reprisal: 'some even tried to cheer the attack without intervening, fearing they would be punished without doing so' (IDI, lower secondary female, Central). This kind of behaviour could have a cumulative effective, creating a mob mentality; 'if someone started teasing, the rest would flock in teasing' (FGD, LGBT, North). This kind of behaviour could have a cumulative effective, creating a mob mentality; 'if someone started teasing, the rest would flock in teasing' (FGD, LGBT, North). This behaviour appeared to stem from unclear school processes and support levels for handling and preventing SOGIE-related and other school violence, fear about not 'fitting in' to gender and sexuality norms and a lack of straightforward training on more assertive steps to managing social advocacy for themselves and others.

5.7 LGBT Students' Impacts & Interventions

5.7.1 LGBT Students at Highest Risk for Negative Outcomes

There were many increased risks for negative impacts particularly experienced by LGBT student victims of school violence, as illustrated in Table 7. There was a clear interrelationship between school violence and reduced academic performance strongly evident for the LGBT group. One boy recalled that during 'the end of secondary school, no one (in class) wanted to interact with me. I could not even ask about school work so I was pushed to sit at the back of the class' (IDI, gay male student, North). One lesbian student said:

IDI, lesbian student, South

"When I was going to school, it was only nice when I had not yet come out about my sexual orientation. It was sad when I came out and then my peers whispered and shunned me. Therefore, I quit going to school (...) I did not speak to anyone, did not trust anyone, because when I came out, my best friend was the person who badmouthed me the most."

Alcohol consumption was also higher among LGBT victims of violence (25.8%) compared to the remainder of the student victim group (18.4%). According to Table 5, almost a quarter of LGBT students who had experienced violence had also experienced suicidal ideation and 14.9% attempted to engage in self-harm or suicide. A transgender student said '(Whenever I got teased like that) I wanted to commit suicide (many times)' (IDI, transgender male-to-female student, North). One girl commented, '(the time when I cut my own wrist) was when I felt distressed' (IDI, female bisexual student, North). Another girl stated that her self-harm attempt was misunderstood and ridiculed at school; 'in Grade 9, I once cut myself and that ordeal was brought up in front of the whole school...they pried into what I did, and posted it on the school's Facebook page' (FGD, lesbian student, South). A young man recalled 'I do not think of suicide because my life was given to me by my parents. Just once, I punched the wall and my hand was bleeding' (IDI, gay male upper secondary student, Central).

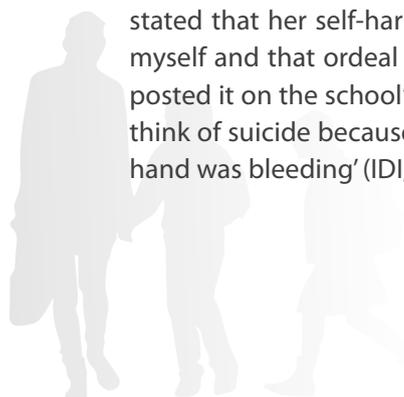


Table 7: Wellbeing and academic outcomes for student victims of SRGBV

	Victims					Non-Victims				
	Male/Female		LGBT		pValue	Male/Female		LGBT		pValue
	N	%	N	%		N	%	N	%	
Thoughts of suicide or self injury in the last 12 months	172	13.6%	149	24.9%	0.000***	39	6.9%	23	18%	0.000***
Intentionally self-injured or attempted suicide in the last 12 months	88	7%	89	14.9%	0.000***	17	3%	11	8.6%	0.007***
Dropped out	474	26.1%	225	31.1%	0.052	119	21.3%	33	26%	Not sig
Alcohol consumption	233	18.4%	155	25.8%	0.000***	69	12.1%	27	21.3%	0.007***
Final study results under average	50	3.9%	37	6.1%	0.025*	19	3.3%	5	3.9%	Not sig

Note: * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

5.7.2 LGBT Students Find School Responses Inadequate

Survey data reveal that whilst 95.4% of the school staff believed that their schools had measures of response in the event of violence, 85.4% of all students reported that they had not received assistance in their experiences of violence. LGBT students were notably less confident in their schools' efforts to prevent violence than other students in the FGDs and IDIs, which is unsurprising considering their high risk of violence of many kinds of violence. According to them, the school focuses more on its reputation and results than the social context in which these assets are developed. 'School management itself has no interest in this programme so there is no action taken. This means that they did not pay attention to issues other than learning, academic achievement, that's all' (FGD, LGBT student, North). There was an opinion shared among the LGBT students that teachers and schools could do more to prevent violence. Many envisioned this occurring through such strategies as protection policies, education programmes, relationship-building, better surveillance and intervention, and a respectful level of privacy in dealing with developing young people's learning around violence. There was a sense that public shaming of people either as perpetrators or as victims was not useful and attracted more violence and revenge; students needed to learn about processes that allowed them to 'save their reputation' in a complex youth social environment, as well as learn how to relate better to others and improve social dynamics.

Privacy was especially a key concern for several LGBT students, and they wanted schools to handle their complaints in a more sensitive manner. 'The homeroom/form teacher pays close attention to emotional matters...however, we find it unpleasant that she often brings such issues to the attention of the whole class' said one LGBT student (FGD, LGBT student, Central). 'I wish in the event of personal matters related to certain student(s), she would meet the concerned students privately to address the problems'. Several LGBT students wanted teachers to be trained in contemporary perspectives gender and sexual diversity to overcome their traditional prejudices and SOGIE-related bias. 'Many teachers in the school still hold gender-related biases. It is important to change their perspectives' (FGD, LBT student, Central). Some schools had mental health counselling rooms which appeared to be a potentially useful structural feature in light of the high rates of risks to LGBT student victims of violence; however, these services in the schools explored were at this stage mostly delivered by teachers (for whom such service provision was cast as an additional task on top of their other pre-existing duties). Several school stakeholders also mentioned the difficulty of attracting students to school counselling rooms, based on the fact that they were not assured it would be a safe and supportive space. A teacher reflected 'students hesitate to enter (the counselling room), afraid that someone might see them there' (IDI, upper secondary teacher, South). This again highlighted the lack of privacy for LGBT victims of violence who may not wish for their sexualities to become known.



6 Discussion & Recommendations

“I see that although Viet Nam is an old-fashioned society, it has progressed very rapidly from a country where homosexuals were thrown into the river, to a country which will very soon become the first in Asia to accept same-sex marriage. This is an enormous amount of progress.”

IDI, gay male student, North

“Currently, the only interface for dialogue about LGBT, if any, between family and school is through the parents and teachers association’s meetings. I think ... the issue of LGBT should be integrated in all aspects of life. For example, it is a good idea to integrate more knowledge of sexuality into educational programmes, educational activities or textbooks. In Germany, there is an illustrative picture (in a textbook) which has two fathers and a child.”

FGD, lesbian female student, North

Key Points

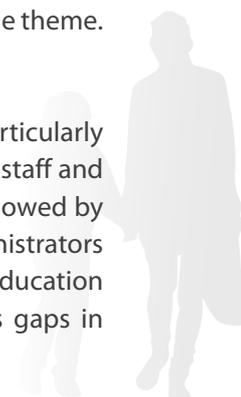
- Curriculum developers and policy-makers need to actively redress the gaps in all education stakeholder groups’ knowledge on SOGIE and LGBT themes through clear education resources revision and policy development offering distinct guidelines in a number of areas.
- Schools need to consider both educational interventions (staff trainings, curricula revisions and so on) and practical support features (resources, uniform flexibility and unisex bathroom options) in direct and holistic efforts to create safe and supportive environments for LGBT students.
- Further research may be needed to overcome some of the gaps in this study including investigation into useful SOGIE-themed resources and SOGIE-related school violence interventions.

6.1 Discussion

This study has provided ground-breaking data on Viet Nam’s LGBT student population. It focused on the awareness of and attitudes to SOGIE-related school violence, LGBT students’ experiences of violence; causes, effects and impacts of violence; and responses in schools. Based on the key findings, the research team has put forth the following key insights for discussion in comparison with the results of other research studies having been conducted all over the world and in Viet Nam on the same theme.

6.1.1 Lack of Awareness of SOGIE-related Violence

The study showed a lack of awareness and understanding of SOGIE-related school violence – particularly the damaging nature of verbal violence – among all education stakeholder groups (students, staff and parents) participating in the research. LGBT students were most aware of these problems, followed by Non-LGBT students who witnessed or participated in the violence. Parents, teachers and administrators appeared less aware of SOGIE-related school violence without prompting. It was clear that education and strong messaging on these issues needed to be provided through schools to redress gaps in awareness and understanding.



6.1.2 SOGIE Stereotypes

Sexuality and gender stereotypes and norms impact LGBT students and can influence SOGIE-related school violence. Many parents had little understanding of gender diversity, and therefore this group often suggested that parents and staff should interfere immediately when children show signs of diverse or non-conforming gender expression. LGBT children can refrain from coming out for this reason, or may legitimately fear family rejection. The lack of awareness of LGBT issues amongst teachers and administrators can lead to their assigning themselves the responsibility of “correcting” and intervening in LGBT identities or diverse gender expressions (which, according to those teachers, equated to non-compliance with and deviance from gender norms or psychological disease). In doing so, teachers had at times unintentionally engaged in or indirectly encouraged SOGIE-related school violence. Unfortunately, such teachers genuinely still believed that they were helping those who were “gender deviant” and creating conditions to enable them to “get on better” with peers. The differences between current approaches, and those which would create a “safe and supportive” environment for LGBT students, need to be more clearly spelled out in education policy guidelines.

6.1.3 High Risk of Violence and Negative Outcomes for LGBT Students

The research unveiled that LGBT students (and those perceived to be LGBT) were at remarkably higher risk of violence than non-LGBT students. During the six months preceding the surveys conducted under this research, LGBT students experienced the highest proportion of violent behaviours (in the full range of forms of violence). They also had the lowest perception of safety at school. As previously pointed out, due to impacts of gender stereotypes about masculinity and femininity norms, and especially the higher valuing of masculinity above femininity in a society heavily influenced by Confucianism, more feminine male LGBT students were vulnerable to violence than masculine female LGBT students. In addition, sometimes “tomboy” female LGBT students were even quite popular with both LGBT and non-LGBT peers. These findings, with the emphasis on the greater potential social value of masculinity for a range of people, differ from relevant studies of Thailand, for example, where feminine roles are available to a greater range of people.^{24,103} LGBT student victims of violence were particularly likely to experience reduced academic performance, participation and attendance (sometimes leading to school drop out). LGBT victims of violence were at particular high risk of negative wellbeing outcomes including thinking about and attempting self-harm and suicide, reflecting findings in both global and regional literature.⁵⁶

6.1.4 Inaction on SOGIE Rights and Violence

Acceptance and inaction towards SOGIE-related school violence was highly problematic in Viet Nam's schools. A culture of inaction was contributed to by parents, school administrators and teachers, students and even LGBT students who had experienced violence. The proportion of LGBT students who would “do nothing” about violence they experienced was higher than that of the non-LGBT students. Fear was a powerful determinant for inaction, both for potential allies scared of revenge if they helped and victims afraid to speak out. Fear of being labelled LGBT even led some students to join in violent acts. These findings highlighted the concerning lack of empowerment and skills amongst all stakeholders to recognise and respond to SOGIE-related school violence, and also suggested the likelihood that many had lost hope that they could speak out in safety or get the support they deserve. A holistic approach to intervention is needed to prevent and respond to SOGIE-related school violence for schools, families and the broader social environment, combining educational guidelines with practical changes, resource development and inter-sectoral studies. This approach needs to consider the new harms and opportunities presented by new technologies; the internet and mobile phones can be not only sites of violence, but of education and support for LGBT youth.⁵² It is also essential to consider and properly frame the extent of schools' responsibilities for SOGIE-related school violence both on and off its physical campus site, including technological environments, for all stakeholders.

Specific interventions emphasised by LGBT students are to prioritise education on SOGIE themes for all stakeholders; privacy (whether in violence responses or counselling provisions); and allowance for gender non-conformity (including uniform lenience and provisions of unisex toilets).

6.2 Recommendations

6.2.1 Recommendations for curriculum developers and policy-makers

Curriculum developers and policy-makers should review current subjects, curriculum and education policies through the lens of SOGIE-related school violence in order to remove prejudiced content and statements or content that are no longer suitable. They are advised to add contemporary best practice in protection for high-risk groups (including LGBT students) in anti-violence codes and guidelines on prevention and responses, as well as explanations for terms and concepts related to gender diversity, gender expressions and sexual orientations – following the path of the latest Asia-Pacific research, and resources and examples in UNESCO guidelines.^{9,72}

It is necessary to supplement materials on gender and sex, gender equality, sexual and gender diversity to secondary schools' textbook boxes and libraries in order to allow teachers and students to access them easily.

Incorporating aspects related to gender equality and gender and sexual diversity into teacher training curricula, can contribute to equip future teachers with sufficient understanding and relevant skills related to these issues. Training updates should also be delivered to staff of all levels in order to help them develop more open attitudes towards LGBT students.

Establishing a well-structure intersectoral collaboration between educational, health care, information and communication management authorities through high-level meetings and theme-based forums could build and enhance common understanding and awareness about gender and sexual diversity more broadly. Civil society engagement with organisations such as UNESCO can support Government bodies to further develop relationships with non-government organisations, including LGBT and rights organisations, to help to introduce these issues sensitively, particularly in the initial phase.

6.2.2 Recommendations for schools

Education system leadership and schools need to conduct professional training programmes, workshops, seminars and the like for teachers and school management staff of the entire sector on SOGIE issues including school violence prevention and response specifically for violence against LGBT students, so that schools can become safer and more supportive spaces for all. This will involve encouraging a new form of 'professionalism' in staff codes and policies which values equity and non-discriminatory attitudes, and foregrounds due respect and treatment in dealing with every student regardless of their gender, gender identity or sexual orientation.

School staff are encouraged to organize rich and interesting activities that are suitable with the students' age group on topics related to gender and sexual diversity so as to provide opportunities for students to develop their understanding and attitudes toward LGBT peers. Ideally, students would be presented with information on related human rights principles and resources.

School system leadership and staff are encouraged to create a culture of non-violence and provide more favourable conditions and environments for LGBT individuals to exercise their rights and to fully exhibit their personal identities and capabilities like any other student. The #PurpleMySchool campaign was one example of a fun age-appropriate awareness-raising educational opportunity in 2015 which many Asian schools, including those in Viet Nam, engaged in, wearing purple and participating in activities to support safe spaces for LGBT learners.

Schools should also adopt more flexible regulations regarding school uniforms and aim towards the provision of at least some unisex toilet options on campus.

Schools need to take the initiative in **setting up LGBT-friendly and privacy-focused school social affairs units, school psychological services or student counselling services operated by professionally trained staff.**



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6.2.3 Research Recommendations

Further research studies on SOGIE-related school violence and LGBT students need to be broader in scope and scale, covering educational institutions of all types across Viet Nam (e.g. primary schools, continuing education institutions, high schools and junior colleges, universities, colleges, among others).

Studies may now examine and consider various policies, interventions and resources for combatting homophobia and transphobia in Viet Nam education settings.

Longitudinal studies and case studies may also provide useful information on how views on SOGIE themes can be developed in education settings in Viet Nam.

Build the capacity of public research institutions and enhance understanding of SOGIE-related terminology, particularly around categorizations of LGBT, thereby strengthening research methodology for future studies.

6.3 Conclusion

This report highlighted the lack of awareness about SOGIE-related school violence in Viet Nam schools, and the high risks of violence and negative academic and wellbeing outcomes for LGBT students. It uncovered the conservative beliefs about gender and sexual orientation held by many school stakeholders, and the need for holistic action which combats prejudices and violence while protecting the privacy and diverse expressions of LGBT individual students. Updates to Vietnamese education policies, curricula and practices would greatly enable such change, and the report provided various recommendations towards ensuring that schools in Viet Nam become safer and more supportive spaces for LGBT students and those perceived to be LGBT.



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