A Content Analysis of Child Sexual Abuse Coverage in Vietnamese News Media*

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Abstract

This study examined how Vietnamese news media reported on Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) cases from 2017 to 2021. A quantitative content analysis was conducted on 663 news articles related to CSA from Vietnam's two most popular news media, *vnexpress.net* and *dantri.vn*. The study found that some news articles disclosed personal information such as gender, age, address, photograph, and occupation of both victims and perpetrators. The most frequently cited sources were government agencies, while experts on children's issues, who are arguably more relevant, were rarely referenced. The most prevalent news frame was *weak punishment,* followed by *moral decay*, *tradition of saving face*, and *lack of proper sex education*. These findings suggest that Vietnamese news media may fall short in raising awareness of CSA as a serious crime. This shortfall could result from a lack of professionalism among journalists and inadequate adherence to journalistic principles. The implications of these findings are discussed in relation to the role of news media and journalism ethics.

Keywords

child sexual abuse, Vietnamese news media, content analysis, vnexpress, dantri

Ⅰ. Introduction

Given the ambiguity in defining Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), researchers often adopt broad definitions. Hauggard (2000) describes CSA as encompassing various sexual actions, including invitation to engage in sexual activity, witnessing exhibitionist behavior, experiencing fondling (both genital and non-genital), and engaging in intercourse. This lack of a clear definition is closely linked to the scarcity of relevant treatment options, protection efforts, and systematic research. Moreover, it impairs the field of journalism, limiting the accuracy of CSA coverage and contributing to confusion in public awareness and policy-making efforts.

CSA is recognized as one of the most serious and pressing global issues. UNICEF (2022) estimates that at least 1 in 10 girls under the age of 20 have been forced into sex or other sexual acts. According to the Joshua Center on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention at the University of Washington,[1] the prevalence of CSA ranges from 8% to 13% for girls and 3% to 17.6% for boys worldwide. In the United States, the prevalence ranges between 12.2% and 26.6% for girls and 5.1% to 7.5% for boys. In Australia, between 2021 and 2022, 11% of women and 3.6% of men under the age of 15 experienced sexual abuse by an adult. The number is much higher in Vietnam. A ESCAP report (2000) revealed that 68.4% of Vietnamese children aged 0 to 14 experienced physical and psychological violence in their homes. The Vietnamese government reported a total of 8,442 child abuse cases, of which 75.4% involved sexual abuse, from 2015 to mid-2019.[2]

Due to the severe, unethical, and sensational nature of CSA, the news media

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1) https://uwjoshuacenter.org/
2) https://dangcongsan.vn/xa-hoi/tac-dong-kinh-te-xa-hoi-cua-dai-dich-covid-19-tai-viet-nam
   -569640.html

have given considerable attention to the issue. It is widely acknowledged that the media play a key role in raising public awareness and understanding of CSA and child protection. However, previous studies have identified problems of media coverage of CSA, such as a focus on the deviance of perpetrators and the shocking or sensational elements of the abuse (Cheit, Shavit, & Reiss-David, 2010); accusations, revelations, and human rights violations (Jung & Lee, 2017). Such practices can lead to negative consequences, including reinforcing stereotypes, stigmatization, discrimination, secondary victimization, or even shifting responsibility onto the victims (Popović, 2021).

How have Vietnamese news media covered CSA so far? Unfortunately, systematic research on CSA in Vietnamese news media is scare. This study aims to analyze the characteristics of CSA coverage in Vietnamese media. Given that previous research has focused on Western media, Vietnamese coverage may differ due to its unique media environment, which is heavily influenced by traditional socio-cultural values. Factors such as the influence of Confucianism, particularly the face-saving culture (Lum, 1998; Futa, Hsu, & Hansen, 2001), the high value placed on women's chastity (Hong, Duong, & Nguyen, 2010), low levels of sex education (Hong et al., 2010), and a lack of understanding of relevant laws (ESCAP, 2000), can hinder early detection, reporting of CSA, and addressing of similar cases. Additionally, the media in Vietnam are controlled by the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), which influences all sectors, including the press (Hang, 2019; Marr, 2017).

This study seeks to analyze the coverage of CSA by Vietnamese news media within the specific socio-cultural and media environment of Vietnam. It examines the characteristics of perpetrators and victims as reported in the media and identifies the implicit frames in the coverage. This study aims to contribute to a better understanding of how CSA is portrayed in Vietnamese media and suggests ways to improve news reporting practices on CSA and children's issues in Vietnamese news media. Most importantly, this study represents the first

content analysis of CSA coverage in Vietnam, contributing to the broader research on this topic.

II. Background of the Study

1. Cultural Values and Media Environment in Vietnam

Understanding Vietnamese cultural values and the media environment is crucial to grasp how CSA cases are reported in Vietnam. Several potential factors may affect news coverage.

First, as a country with a strong Confucian influence, Vietnamese society views individuals as part of a family, with certain moral responsibilities and expectations (Park & Chesla, 2007). Within families, older members occupy higher positions, males hold the dominant power as decision-makers, and children are expected to take care of their parents and respect their wishes (Futa et al., 2001). The societal obsession with female chastity means that premarital sex is considered immoral and harmful (Hong, Duong, & Nguyen, 2010; Tran, Alink, Berkel, & Ijzendoorn, 2017). Because a loss of face by an individual brings shame to their entire family, child sexual abuse is often regarded as a private issue, leading to reluctance to disclose incidents to protect the family image (Futa et al., 2001).

Second, parents and teachers are hesitant to provide sex education to their children and students. Until the early 1990s, sex education was not discussed in families or schools. It was deemed unnecessary for adolescents, who were expected to understand sex when they became adults (Hong et al., 2010).

Third, Confucianism is sensitive to moral criticism. Media often criticize CSA perpetrators for their lack of morality (Cheit, 2003) and use emotionally charged terms such as "shameless," "brutish," and "devilish," emphasizing their lack of

remorse (Jung & Lee, 2017). In some cases, moral judgments and accusations are directed not only at perpetrators but also at victims, especially teenagers (Popović, 2021).

Lastly, Vietnamese media are heavily influenced by state control. When the economic reform project known as ''Đổi mới' was launched in 1986, there was no private ownership in Vietnam (Center for Media and Development, 2020), and all media outlets were state-run. Although the 1990s saw the emergence of private media companies, such as online news outlets and international lifestyle magazines, most still operated under state agencies (Yến-Khanh, Phelan, & Gray, 2022). As a result, Vietnamese media are subordinated to the government and do not function as public spaces (Yến-Khanh et al., 2022).

Overall, this collectivist culture and state control over the press may contribute to a reluctance to report abuse incidents within families, potentially leading to underreporting of CSA in Vietnam (Stoltenborgh, Ijendoorn, Euser, & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2011; Tran et al., 2017).

2. Problems with News Coverage of CSA

Although there is no unified definition of CSA, the news media report on cases and issues directly and indirectly related to it. When news coverage focuses on the shocking aspects of CSA, it fails to address the real problems and causes, leaving readers without a comprehensive understanding. There has been a tendency to report CSA dramatically, emphasizing the deviance of the offenders rather than providing systematic analysis and constructive discussion (Jung & Lee, 2017; Yang, 2010). Such practices, which highlight the sensational aspects of CSA, can intentionally or unintentionally expose personal information of victims and perpetrators, and limit the inclusion of diverse and relevant sources that could provide useful insights into causes and solutions. Given the high prevalence of CSA and a lack of research on the role of Vietnamese news media, it is necessary to conduct systematic research in this context.

We propose two international journalistic standards and ethics as guidelines to assess Vietnamese news media practices. The first is whether personal information about perpetrators and victims is exposed in the news. The second is whether the reports reflect various voices.

1) Revealing Personal Information of Perpetrators and Victims

Previous studies have highlighted the problems associated with exposing personal information about victims and perpetrators in CSA news coverage. Journalism ethics strictly prohibits revealing identifying information about victims, especially in CSA cases.[3] According to the WeProtect Global Alliance, an international organization over 300 members, including governments, civil society, and the private sector working together to protect children from sexual crimes, media coverage must ensure that victims are not stigmatized or put at risk. In reporting, journalists should avoid using labels or descriptions that could lead to harmful consequences for the victim through unethical and unconsidered reporting. Otherwise, it could result in secondary harms to the victims and constitute a violation of their human rights. Common information exposed by the news media includes the gender, name, age, photograph, and address of both victims and perpetrators.

Additionally, the relationship between the victims and perpetrators is sometimes disclosed. Most research on CSA shows that the sexual abuse is often committed by school or daycare staff (Kitzinger & Skidmore, 1995), while CSA within families is rarely mentioned (Cheit, 2003). In a study by Mejia, Cheyne, and Dorfman (2012), 70% of the news articles identified perpetrators as individuals known to the victims, such as coaches, teachers, and family acquaintances. Identifying the relationship between victims and perpetrators in news coverage can create a false belief that specific individuals or occupations

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3) Refer to www.weprotect.org

are more likely to commit CSA. For example, if news consistently identifies perpetrators as stepfathers or teachers, it may gradually construct negative stereotypes against those who are not the victims' biological fathers or teachers. Furthermore, this approach builds undue suspicion towards individuals specified in the news while failing to raise awareness of other potential perpetrators. Representing victims based on gender and age can also risk shifting the blame onto those who fit specific stereotypes (Popović, 2021).

To understand how Vietnamese news media handle personal information about victims and perpetrators in CSA cases, we propose the following research question.

RQ1: How is personal information about CSA victims and perpetrators, including gender, name, age, photograph, occupation, and relationship, reported in the Vietnamese news media?

2) Disproportionate Use of News Sources

When reporting on CSA, the news media should use multiple sources, including law enforcement, the legal system, health and educational institutions, children-related experts, as well as perpetrators, victims, and their families. This is important because the public's perception is influenced by who is quoted in the news (Jullian, 2011). Although the use of news sources may vary depending on the period, country, or media outlet, government agencies are typically the most common source (Kitzinger & Skidmore, 1995; Lonne & Parton, 2014; Hey, 2010). Few studies indicate that professionals or non-governmental organizations are frequently used as sources in CSA reporting (Cheit, Shavit, & Reiss-David, 2010).

The voices of child victims or their parents often go unheard due to ethical concerns and confidentiality requirements (Lonne & Parton, 2014). Instead, police officers, politicians, and psychiatrists are sometimes cited on behalf of the

victims because the media often portray victims as weak or passive (Yang, 2010). The selection of news sources reflects what news editors and journalists find newsworthy (Dunivin, Yan, Ince, & Rojas, 2022). Therefore, diverse use of news sources is crucial for ensuring greater transparency in media reports, allowing readers to make more informed choices and understand the issue's full structure (Calford & Chakraborty, 2023). However, media outlets frequently rely excessively on government sources, resulting in a one-sided perspective (Kitzinger & Skidmore, 1995; Lonne & Parton, 2014). Given that Vietnamese news media are under the control of the CPV, it is likely that the government voices will appear dominant CSA coverage. In this context, we propose the following research question.

RQ2: What are the main sources of CSA cases reported in Vietnamese news media?

3. News Frames in CSA Coverage

According to Entman (1993), a news frame selects and emphasizes information in a way that makes it more noticeable and meaningful to readers. By framing CSA in certain ways, the media can significantly impact public opinion and how the people perceive the issue. To help audiences understand the nature of CSA, the media need to approach CSA as a social and systemic issue rather than as an isolated incident (Döring & Walter, 2020). However, some studies point out that most news coverage of CSA is case-based or attributes the problem to individual actions (Beckett, 1996; Kitzinger & Skidmore, 1995; Weatherred, 2015). In other words, most news reports focus on a specific event rather than discussing it widely as a widespread social issue, often failing to provide solutions (Beckett, 1996; Ho & Chan, 2018; Kitzinger & Skidmore, 1995; Mejia et al., 2012).

Aubrun and Grady (2003) found that American media used four frames when

covering child abuse; criminal atrocity, failure of child protective services, sexual predators, and the sanctity of the family. In Korea, Yang (2010) identified seven dominant frames from two representative cases of CSA. Jung and Lee (2017) analyzed how Korean TV news framed a famous CSA case and identified five frames: context-oriented, interest-oriented, emotional conviction/punishment reinforcement, stereotyping judgment, and solution suggestions.

Some scholars have focused on how news frame attribute the cause of each case. Applying the cause frame can help identify the viewpoint of the news media and highlight problems in their reporting practices (Lee & Kim, 2016). Previous studies found that the individual cause frame is more commonly used than the social cause frame in news coverage. The individual cause frame often criticizes the behavior, character, clothing, private life of the victim or perpetrator, while the social cause frame coincides with the thematic framing that emphasizes social responsibility (Yu, 2021). Weatherred (2017) found that news framing of CSA in the US has shifted from focusing on individual causes to social causes, arguing that CSA is a serious social problem, and its roots should be examined from a societal perspective. However, Yu (2021) revealed that Chinese media, influenced by traditional Confucian values, tend to attribute CSA to individual causes as personal moral failings.

Examining the causes of CSA and how it is framed is a critical task in news media analysis. Depending on where the media places responsibility, the public may hold a certain individual or institution accountable and seek solutions accordingly. Instead of limiting our analysis to individual and social cause frames, this study aims to identify the specific cause frames conveyed in news articles. Previous research has noted that a lack of studies that connect and analyze a country's culture with its media environment. Given Vietnam's unique socio-cultural values, it is expected to have its own pattern of cause framing in CSA coverage. Thus, applying the cause frame to CSA coverage in Vietnam is

appropriate (Vu et al., 2019; recited in Yến-Khanh, 2022). In this context, we propose the following research question.

RQ3: What are the dominant cause frames that constitute Vietnamese news media coverage of CSA?

Ⅲ. Methods

1. Sample

This study analyzes news articles about CSA from two online Vietnamese newspapers. In Vietnam, private companies are not allowed to establish press media outlets; instead, news production is only possible in cooperation with government agencies.[4] There are several news aggregator sites, but they are perceived to be less reliable than traditional press media and are often treated as tabloids.

This study selects the two most visited press media outlets in Vietnam, vnexpress.net and dantri.vn, for the following reasons. Vnexpress.net was initially a news aggregator site established by a private company called FPT Group in 2001 but is currently managed by the Ministry of Science and Technology of Vietnam and is now the largest online newspaper in the country. It is known that vnexpress.net is less propagandistic than other fully state-run media outlets and allows for multiple perspectives in its reporting (Eek & Ellstrom, 2008). On the other hand, dantri.vn is a news agency under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, making it a fully state-run media outlet. Both media outlets have been used as subjects in previous studies (Eek & Ellstrom, 2008).

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4) https://institute.aljazeera.net/en/ajr/article/2388

The analysis period for this study is set to five years from January 1, 2017, to December 31, 2021, to examine CSA reports in Vietnamese media. This timeframe was chosen because the Children's Law was introduced in mid-2016 and took effect in 2017, outlining not only children's rights but also protection within society. It is important to observe the characteristics of news coverage following the enforcement of this law.

To collect articles, a traditional quantitative research procedure was followed. First, frequently used keywords related to CSA in Vietnamese media were identified and searched online in Vietnamese. Keywords such as 'xâm hại trẻ em' (child abuse), 'xâm hại tình dục trẻ em' (child sexual abuse), 'dâm ô trẻ em' (child obscenity), 'hiếp dâm trẻ em' (child rape) were selected. Second, articles were searched from vnexpress.net and dantri.vn using Google Advanced Search, limited to the site's addresses and the specified analysis period. Each site search was limited to the first 200 results per keyword to avoid duplicate or irrelevant results. Third, to minimize missed articles, each keyword was searched again on each newspaper's website to gather articles from the analysis period. Finally, duplicate articles collected through the two search methods were checked and removed. Articles not relevant to the analysis (e.g., foreign events, articles showing only videos or pictures, readers' opinions, or those that do not mention specific CSA cases) were excluded. The final sample consisted of 663 articles (195 from vnexpress.net and 468 from dantri.vn).

2. Coding Procedure

A coding book, including operational definition and optional categories, was developed based on previous studies (Burns, 2020; Weatherred, 2017; Yen-Khanh, 2022; Yu, 2021). Two Vietnamese graduate students participated in the actual coding process. Both are media studies majors in Korea and regularly read news online. To enhance the inter-coder reliability for the analysis variables, we conducted coder training using CAS related articles from

English-language, Vietnamese, and Korean newspapers. For the Vietnamese news articles, we used articles outside the study's analysis period. The training was repeated for any variables with discrepancies until the reliability reached a level of 0.8 or higher. During this process, the codebook was revised and improved. Using Krippendorff's alpha to calculate reliability, 10% (N = 66) of the total sample was randomly selected, and each coder independently conducted the coding. The inter-coder reliability scores were above 0.92 for categories related to personal information, 0.92 for the relationship between victim and perpetrator, 0.98 for the news source, and 0.84 for the cause frame. For articles involving more than two victims, perpetrators, or news sources, a frequency analysis of multiple responses was performed.

3. Operational definitions

Personal information of victims and perpetrators: This was defined as information that could identify victims and perpetrators, including gender, age, occupation, relationship, name, address, and photos. The genders of both victims and perpetrators was coded separately as male, female, or not mentioned. Ages were recorded as stated in the article. Names were coded as real name, initial/nickname, or not mentioned. Photograph was coded as full-face photo, partial face or mosaic, other body parts, or no photo. Addresses ranged from detailed address such as house number or building, city/district/ward address, neighbor/village address, school (or company) name/address, or not mentioned. Occupations of perpetrators were classified based on the Vietnamese Occupational List: institutional leader or manager, professionals, company employee, business person, workers, unemployed, other occupations, or no occupation mentioned. The relationship between victim and perpetrator was categorized in more detail than in previous studies: father, mother, stepfather, stepmother, grandfather, grandmother, brother, relatives, friends or lovers, teachers or school employees, neighbors or other acquaintances, strangers, or

relation not mentioned.

News source: A news source was defined as an individual or organization quoted in an article. The sources were classified into 14 categories including perpetrator, victim, perpetrator's family, victim's family, neighbor, colleagues, friends or acquaintances, government authorities, children experts, other experts (legal, psychologist, education, doctors, lawyers, etc.), activists, journalists, foreign media or internet news, other sources of information, or no source mentioned (Linne & Parton, 2014; Mulugeta, 2014).

Cause frame about child sexual abuse: The cause frame was defined as the attributed cause of the issue in Vietnamese media reports on CSA. This study sought to identify causes by grouping similar themes and analyzing their specific meanings (Jung & Lee, 2017; Yang, 2010). Four cause frames inductively derived through pilot coding. ① Tradition of saving face: Articles suggesting that CSA occurs because Vietnamese Confucian customs pressure victims or their families to remain silent or hesitate to report perpetrators. ② Weak punishment: Articles highlighting inadequate punishment due to unclear policies or regulations on CSA, such as slow responses from judicial authorities, avoidance of the issue, or lenient laws related to CSA. ③ Moral decay: Articles suggesting that social and technological developments, including Internet exposure and the introduction of news lifestyles, have disrupted Vietnam's traditional culture and eroded morality. ④ Lack of proper sex education: Articles pointing out the absence of adequate sex education and emphasizing the responsibility of parents and schools.[5]

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5) These four cause frames are not mutually exclusive; some articles contain multiple frames, while others have none. If an article included more than one cause frame, only the primary frame was analyzed.

Ⅳ. Results

1. Revealing Personal Information of Victims and Perpetrators

The first research question examined whether personal information of CSA victims and perpetrators was exposed in Vietnamese news media. Multiple response frequency analyses were conducted. The results regarding the victims were presented in Table 1. In 88.6% of the articles, the gender of the victims was disclosed. Of those, 85.3% identified female victims, while only 3.3% identified male victims. The age of the victims was reported in 84.1% of the cases. The most commonly reported age group was 11 to 15 years old (43.7%), followed by 6 to 10 years old (33.6%), and 1 to 5 years old (6.8%). In terms of name disclosure, 0.7% of the articles mentioned the victims' real names, while 50.9% used initials or nicknames. The vast majority of articles (97.3%) did not include any photographs of the victims. When photos were included, they were either partial faces/mosaics (3.3%) or other body parts (3.0%). Regarding address, 25.3% of articles specified the city, district, or ward, 7.3% mentioned the town or neighborhood, and 9% disclosed the school name or address. 0.3% revealed the victim's full address.

〈Table 1. Multiple response analysis of personal information of victims〉

Variable	Value	N(735)	%
Gender	Male	24	3.3
	Female	627	85.3
	Not mentioned	84	11.4
Age	1 to 5 years old	50	6,8
	6 to 10 years old	247	33.6
	11 to 15 years old	321	43.7
	Not mentioned	117	15.9
Name	Real name	5	0.7
	Nickname or initial	374	50.9
	Not mentioned	356	48.4
Photo	Full face	0	0.0
	Part of face or mosaic	24	3.3
	Other body parts	22	3.0
	Not revealed	689	93.7
Address	Real address	2	0.3
	City/district/ward address	186	25.3
	Town/neighborhood address	54	7.3
	School name or address	66	9.0
	Not mentioned	427	58.1

The next analysis focused on the exposure of personal information about perpetrators and the results were presented in Table 2. The gender of the perpetrators was disclosed in 96% of the articles, with males overwhelmingly representing 96% of those identified. Information about the perpetrators' age was disclosed in 81% of the cases. The majority was aged 18 to 59 (56.6%), followed by those aged 60 and older (18.8%), and adolescents aged 16 to 27 (3.5%). The real names of the perpetrators were exposed in 75.8%, while 12.7% used initials or nicknames. In terms of photographs, 41.6% of the articles included full-face photos of the perpetrators. Detailed addresses, including the city, district, or ward, were disclosed in 51.9%. In some instances, more specific information, such as town/neighborhood addresses (9.8%) and company names (9.2%) were included. The occupation of the perpetrators was revealed in

35.4%. Among those disclosed, professionals (9.1%) and institutional leaders (8.8%) were the most frequently mentioned.

〈Table 2. Multiple response analysis of personal information of the perpetrators〉

Category	Item	N(695)	%
Gender	Male	667	96.0%
	Female	1	0.1%
	Not mentioned	27	3.9%
Age	1 to 15 years old	15	2.2%
	16 to 17 years old	24	3.5%
	18 to 59 years old	393	56.6%
	60 and older	131	18.8%
	Not mentioned	132	19%
Name	Real name	527	75.8%
	Fake name or initial	88	12.7%
	Not mentioned	80	11.5%
Photo	Full face	289	41.6%
	Part of face or mosaic	24	3.5%
	Other parts of body	48	6.9%
	Not revealed	334	48.1%
Address	Real address	2	0.3%
	City/district/ward address	361	51.9%
	Town/neighborhood address	68	9.8%
	Company name or address	64	9.2%
	Not mentioned	200	28.8%
Occupation	Institutional leader (manager)	61	8.8%
	Professionals	63	9.1%
	Company employee	25	3.6%
	Business people	22	3.2%
	Worker	57	8.2%
	Unemployed	9	1.3%
	Other job	10	1.4%
	Not mentioned	449	64.6%

Third, the reports on the relationship between victims of CSA and perpetrators are summarized in Table 3. The majority of perpetrators were acquaintances of victims (59.4%), while only 8.9% of cases involved a stranger. Among the acquaintance group, neighbors or other acquaintances were the most common perpetrators, accounting for 27.6% of the cases.

〈Table 3. Multiple response analysis of the relationship between victim and perpetrator〉

Item	N	%
Father	13	1.9%
Stepfather	31	4.5%
Grandfather	3	0.4%
Brother	4	0.6%
Relative	19	2.7%
Friend or lover	75	10.8%
Teacher of other school employee	76	10.9%
Neighbors or other acquaintances	192	27.6%
Stranger	62	8.9%
Not mentioned	220	31.7%
Total	695	100.0%

2. News sources about CSA

The second research question examined the primary sources cited in news reports about CSA in Vietnamese news media. The results, as summarized in Table 4, indicate that government officials or agencies (e.g., police, prosecutors, and courts) were the most frequently cited sources, appearing in 44% of the articles. Although a variety of experts were cited in 9.3% of cases, only 2.5% involved child specialists or relevant experts, which highlights a lack of specialized insight into CSA matters. Victims' families were cited in 9.3% of the cases, often focusing on their emotional pain and experience, while perpetrators were frequently quoted, particularly in legal contexts, appearing in

7% of the articles. Notably, 19.8% of the articles did not mention any specific source, suggesting that a substantial number of reports may rely on either generalized statements or unverified claims, which could raise concerns about journalistic standards and the thoroughness of reporting.

⟨Table 4. Multiple response frequency analysis of news sources⟩

Item	N	%
Perpetrator	63	7.0%
Victim	29	3.2%
Perpetrator's family	3	0.3%
Victim's family	84	9.3%
Neighbors	14	1.5%
Friend, colleague, acquaintance	5	0.6%
Government official or agency	404	44.0%
Child specialist or expert	23	2.5%
Other expert	84	9.3%
Activist	5	0.6%
Journalist	9	1.0%
Foreign newspaper	3	0.3%
No source mentioned	179	19.8%
Total	905	100.0%

3. Cause frame of CSA

The third research question aimed to identify the dominant cause frames used in Vietnamese media when reporting on CSA. The findings are presented in Table 5. Among the 36.8% of articles that presented a cause frame, the most common frame was weak punishment which appeared in 15.8% of those articles. The second most frequently used frame was moral decay, which was presented in 11% of the articles with a cause frame. The tradition of saving face frame appeared in 5.4% of the articles and the lack of proper sex education frame was used as a cause frame in 4.5%.

⟨Table 5. Use of news frames in CSA coverage⟩

Cause frame	N	%
Tradition of saving face	36	5.4%
Weak punishment	105	15.8%
Morality decay	73	11.0%
Lack of proper sex education	30	4.5%
No cause frame	419	63.2%
Total	663	100.0%

Note) Notably, 63.2% of the articles did not include any cause frame. This is likely because a significant proportion of the articles (82.5%) were straight news reports or commentary that focused on simply describing CSA incidents without providing an in-depth analysis of the causes.

V. Discussion

Amid the growing seriousness of CSA in Vietnam, this study sought to evaluate how the Vietnamese media contributes to public awareness and perceptions about the issue, as well as its potential influence on government policy-making. The study examined the characteristics of CSA reporting, with a focus on personal information disclosure, news sources, and the use of cause frames.

The findings revealed that Vietnamese media frequently exposed personal information about both victims and perpetrators. Regarding the victims, most articles disclosed gender and age, and while half of the articles used nicknames or initials, there were incidents where the real names of victims were disclosed. About 6% of the articles included partial facial or other body parts of the victims. Additionally, 25% of the articles disclosed the victims' ward-level address, which could lead to their identification. This raises significant ethical

concerns about the potential for secondary harm to victims and their families. The Vietnamese media needs to reevaluate its reporting practice to ensure they align with international ethical guidelines on protecting victims of child sexual abuse.

Similarly, perpetrators' personal information was frequently disclosed. A significant portion of articles revealed the real names of perpetrators (75.8%) and full-face photographs (41.6%). This raises concerns about privacy and ethical reporting, particularly since suspects and defendants have not been convicted and are protected by law. Compared to a previous study in which only 12% of perpetrators' names were disclosed (Jones, Finkelhor, & Beckwith, 2010), the Vietnamese media's practices appear more invasive. Moreover, revealing the perpetrators' personal information indirectly risks exposing the victims' identity, especially when specific relationships or occupations are disclosed. The media's approach raises the potential for discrimination and stigmatization, both of the suspects and certain social groups.

This study also found that government officials and agencies were the dominant news sources cited in CSA coverage, appearing in 44% of the articles. Although the government's perspective on social issues is crucial, the over-reliance on these sources limits the inclusion of other critical voices, such as those of victims' families and child experts. While government sources were cited nearly five times more often, victims' families and experts only appeared in 9.3% and 2.5% of the articles, respectively. This imbalance in sourcing raises concerns about the depth and breadth of reporting on CSA, as the voices of experts who could offer more reasonable perspectives on child protection and psychological impact are often underrepresented. The heavy use of government perspectives may also result in a less diverse portrayals of the issue, limiting public understanding of the broader social and psychological dimensions of CSA.

Regarding the use of cause frames, most articles (63.2%) did not include a

frame, likely due to the predominance of straight news and commentary articles that focus on reporting events rather than providing a deeper analysis of the underlying causes. The most common cause frame was weak punishment followed by moral decay, tradition of saving face, and lack of proper sex education. The frequent use of the weak punishment frame points to a focus on legal inadequacies and lenient responses to CSA offenders. Similarly, the moral decay frame blames moral decline and societal changes for the increase in CSA cases. The frame related to tradition of saving face and lack of proper sex education reflect the influence of Confucianism in Vietnamese society, where issues surrounding sexual abuse are often hidden to preserve family dignity. These frames also indicate societal challenges such as reluctance to acknowledge abuse and the absence of comprehensive sex education in both schools and homes.

Interestingly, this study found that while Vietnamese media did use frames related to personal deviance and moral degradation, they also applied social cause frames, such as police injustice, more frequently than expected. This shift toward focusing on societal factors marks a divergence from earlier studies on Confucian-influenced societies, where individual blame was typically emphasized. This difference could be attributed to the increasing public discourse on CSA in Vietnam, particularly as many high-profile cases have drawn attention to weaknesses in the legal system. The media's attention to legal reforms and policy improvements shows that there are fewer restrictions on covering systemic issues like injustice, even in a country where reporting on many other social problems is restricted.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the CSA articles in the two Vietnamese news media significantly deviate from standard journalistic ethics, such as refraining from disclosing personal sources, including expert opinions. The WeProtect Global Alliance emphasizes that journalists should avoid using labels or descriptions that could harm the victim through

unethical or careless reporting. Even considering the Vietnamese media environment, which is not entirely free from government influence, these results indicate that the CSA reporting in the two news media does not meet international standards. This shortfall may be attributed to a lack of professionalism among journalists and insufficient adherence to journalistic principles. Furthermore, while these media identify causes of CSA, such as weak punishment, moral decay, tradition of saving face, and lack of proper sex education, the majority of their articles are straightforward reports of incidents, failing to provide a thorough diagnosis of these causes. This highlights the need for a reassessment of the media's role and function in reporting.

In conclusion, while this study provides valuable insights into Vietnamese media coverage of CSA, it also highlights some limitations. The analysis was limited to two online newspapers, and future studies could explore CSA reporting across a wider variety of media platforms, including television, print magazines, and social media. Additionally, while content analysis reveals how the media frames CSA, it does not account for the social impact of these frames on public perceptions. Future research could investigate how news framing influences societal attitudes toward CSA and policy reform. Despite these limitations, the findings of this study contribute to the growing body of research on media coverage of children's issues in Vietnam and provide a foundation for future studies on media reporting of CSA and other social issues.

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