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Research Article

Social Dominance Orientation, Moral Disengagement, and Masculinity as Predictors of Street Harassment Prevalence

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Abstract

Street harassment targeting women has persisted as an ongoing societal issue. This study examined masculinity, Social Dominance Orientation, and moral disengagement as predictors of street harassment behavior among men. Using convenience sampling, male participants (*N* = 211) completed questionnaires measuring these variables. Multiple regression analysis was used to assess predictive relationships, and internal consistency was examined. Results demonstrated that masculinity, Social Dominance Orientation, and moral disengagement significantly predicted street harassment frequency, with masculinity emerging as the strongest predictor. The study provides empirical support for understanding psychological factors

underlying street harassment perpetration, offering insights for intervention strategies and further research implications discussed within the paper. This study presents a predictive model for street harassment frequency, shedding light on the motivations of male perpetrators and contributing to research on gender and behavior. However, these findings are only a starting point. Greater awareness, further research, and practical solutions are required to fully address and eradicate street harassment.

Keywords: Masculinity; Moral Disengagement; Street Harassment; Social Dominance Orientation.

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At a global spectrum, street harassment has been recognized by human-rights organizations and activists as a serious and dangerous social problem deeply connected to sexism and gender violence. This harassment is predominantly perpetrated by men against victims of various regions, races, ethnicities, and genders, with women being the primary targets (Fairchild, 2023). A comprehensive global study documented street harassment occurrences across 37 countries from 1980 to 2015 (Kearl, 2014). Nationally, the Philippines reports that 58% of sexual harassment occurs in street settings (Cabral, 2017). In Manila, 43% of students reported experiencing street harassment on public transport, and approximately 85% of these students did not report the incident (Abesamis, 2024).

This universally observed phenomenon has been consistently documented in research, showing that these seemingly 'minor' and 'everyday' intrusions constitute a routine component of interactions in public and semi-public spaces. Estimates indicate that approximately 15% to

90% of women experience street harassment at least once in their lives, with prevalence varying per country and per operationalized definition of what constitutes street harassment (Fileborn & O'Neill, 2023).

Studies on street harassment demonstrate that this issue has widespread consequences, with a significant proportion of women experiencing sexual harassment by unknown men in public environments (Keel et al., 2024). Recently, there has been a marked increase in the number of activists, bloggers, and digital media outlets addressing street harassment, indicating the emergence of a global social movement aimed at combating this pervasive issue (O'Neill & Fileborn, 2025). Interestingly, social media has become the primary outlet for victims of street harassment rather than reporting it to government bodies or public institutions (Milani & Carbajal, 2023).

Extensive research demonstrates the significant harm that street harassment inflicts on victims, though the extent of harm varies by context (Rodas-Zuleta et al., 2022). Women experiencing street harassment exhibit various negative psychological consequences, including anxiety, depression, and self-objectification, which correlate with decreased mood, disordered eating, body shame, and increased self-monitoring behaviors (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008). Despite abundant documentation of negative implications, street harassment persists, and research on its antecedents, motivations, and facilitating factors remains limited.

The scarcity of research on street harassment may stem from definitional ambiguity. Previous literature frequently interchanges street harassment with sexual harassment (Ramadan, 2018). Sexual harassment, serving as the broader construct encompassing street harassment, presents challenges in establishing absolute definitions (Pina et al., 2009). Since both constructs share general concepts, street harassment similarly lacks definitional clarity. However, this study posits that street harassment constitutes a distinct construct, as its resulting harm appears more severe than that of sexual harassment (Macmillan et al., 2000), and certain concepts of sexual harassment cannot be applied to street harassment contexts (Maass et al., 2003).

Recognizing that street harassment and sexual harassment share general concepts while remaining distinct in specific variables, this study explores street harassment using empirically tested sexual harassment factors. These include perpetrator Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) (Fox & Tang, 2014), Moral Disengagement (Page et al., 2016), and Masculine Identity (Quinn, 2002), based on O'Hare and O'Donohue's (1998) Four-factor Theory of Sexual

Harassment. The researchers aim to identify the strongest predictor among Social Dominance Orientation, moral disengagement, and masculinity to further illuminate the phenomenon of street harassment.

Additionally, existing street harassment studies predominantly investigate victim perspectives, potentially creating skewed data reports. Given street harassment's subjective nature, relying solely on victim perspectives may prove unreliable. Examining perpetrator motivations and the factors that facilitate or inhibit them offers a fresh perspective on understanding street harassment dynamics.

Street Harassment & Its Predictors

Street harassment is a common problem affecting groups like women, LGBTQI+, and gender-diverse people. It not only causes fear and social withdrawal but also harms mental and physical health (Ison et al., 2023; Vera-Gray, 2016; Allen, 2015). Most research looks at how women experience harassment in public spaces, which is part of a broader pattern of gender-based violence and power exertion in urban settings, differing from harassment in workplaces (Keel et al., 2024). Street harassment is characterized as harassing women in public places by strangers (Ramadan, 2018). Kissling (1991) outlined key characteristics: (a) occurrence in public spaces, (b) comments exchanged between strangers, (c) unacceptable responses that may provoke hostility, and (d) degrading remarks often targeting body parts. Specific behaviors include verbal communication that demeans, degrades, or carries sexual connotations (Bailey, 2017). Street harassment encompasses verbal and non-verbal behaviors that demean or sexualize individuals, such as unwelcome compliments or lewd looks (Bailey, 2017). It overlaps with other forms of sexual harassment, sometimes being labeled interchangeably in research (Ramadan, 2018).

In the Philippines, laws such as Republic Act No. 11313 (Safe Spaces Act) address street harassment in various public areas. This law aims to prevent and penalize gender-based sexual harassment (GBSH) in streets and public spaces. Enforcement involves police and local authorities trained in gender sensitivity to prevent behaviors like cursing, wolf-whistling, catcalling, leering, intrusive gazing, unwanted invitations, derogatory slurs, ridicule based on gender, sexual jokes, and any action that invades a person’s personal space or threatens their safety (Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 11313, 2019).

Studies have identified various psychological, social, and cultural elements that can predict both the occurrence of street harassment and the acceptance of such behaviors. This study

examined the interplay of predictors from the lens of O'Hare and O'Donohue's (1998) Four-Factor Theory of Sexual Harassment. This theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the causes and risk factors of sexual harassment by integrating individual, organizational, and sociocultural influences. This model is recognized for its predictive strength; however, the researchers used specific terms for this study. Three factors were examined as street harassment predictors: (1) Social Dominance Orientation (SDO), (2) moral disengagement, and (3) masculinity.

Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) refers to the belief that some groups should have more power over others. SDO often motivates male harassers seeking to maintain dominance over women, especially where patriarchal norms reinforce male superiority (Russell & Trigg, 2004; O'Hare & O'Donohue, 1998; Medina, 2015). Higher SDO correlates with increased harassment and victim-blaming attitudes (Pratto et al., 1994; Kelly et al., 2015). SDO refers to the belief that one's own group is superior to others and supports inequality between groups (Russell & Trigg, 2004; Tang & Fox, 2016). This belief often drives male harassers, who seek to maintain power and control over women, especially when they feel their dominance is challenged (O'Hare & O'Donohue, 1998; Pratto et al., 1994). In societies like the Philippines, where patriarchal values are strong, male superiority and sexism are deeply ingrained, which increases SDO and the likelihood of harassment (Medina, 2015; Oswald et al., 2012; Sibley et al., 2007). Research supports that men with higher SDO are more likely to engage in street harassment and expect women to accept it without protest (Kelly et al., 2015). Recent research by Giulani et al. (2025) found that people who tolerate street harassment tend to exhibit lower empathy and higher SDO, highlighting the roles these factors play in shaping attitudes toward harassment. Understanding these dynamics offers pathways for psychological interventions aimed at reducing street harassment by targeting empathic awareness and challenging dominance beliefs.

Moral disengagement, as conceptualized by Bandura (1999), represents a psychosocial maneuver enabling individuals to avoid moral sanctions while performing immoral acts. This concept helps explain why individuals engage in harmful behaviors, from soldiers in war to people acting aggressively in schools or public spaces. For those who harass others, especially men trying to uphold a tough or masculine identity, moral disengagement allows them to ignore or downplay the moral conflict in their actions (Page & Pina, 2015). It's a way to justify their behavior in their own minds, allowing them to continue without feeling guilty.

Moral disengagement operates through eight mechanisms organized across four domains: behavioral justification, agency obscuration, outcome distortion, and recipient dehumanization. For example, some harassers use moral justification to claim their actions serve a greater purpose, such as demonstrating masculine solidarity (Quinn, 2002). Others use polite-sounding terms to mask harmful actions, calling harassment as “girl watching" (Quinn, 2002), "having fun," or "complimenting women" (Ilahi, 2009). They might also compare harassment to worse crimes, such as rape, to lessen its seriousness (Laniya, 2005). Perpetrators also diffuse and displace responsibility by hiding in groups (Bandura, 1999; Wesselmann et al., 2010), although blaming authorities is less common, as street harassment lacks clear oversight (Milani & Carbajal, 2023). Lastly, perpetrators also minimize and downgrade the intensity of the harassment, and often shift the blame to the victim (Agerholm, 2017; Bandura, 1999)

Men who strongly identify with traditional masculine roles are more likely to use these moral disengagement techniques (Page et al., 2016). This also relates to higher harassment rates toward women who challenge gender norms (Maass et al., 2003). Moral disengagement enables these men bypass feelings of conflict or guilt, allowing them to engage in harmful behavior without experiencing psychological discomfort (Page et al., 2016). This aligns with O'Hare and O'Donohue’s (1998) theory that moral disengagement is a key internal factor behind harassment acts. Additionally, Vescio et al. (2023) note that failures to live up to cultural ideals of masculinity can also encourage attitudes and behaviors linked to sexual violence and harassment.

Masculinity embodies men’s attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs regarding traditional masculine gender norms and roles, which often lead them toward power, achievement, and status-seeking behaviors. These beliefs vary culturally, and some beliefs encourage harmful behaviors like aggression and harassment (Beynon, 2002). Popular culture has exaggerated some of these ideas, promoting the old “caveman” image that justifies men’s aggressive behaviors as natural or evolutionary (McCaughey, 2008). However, research shows that masculinity is not hardwired in DNA but is shaped by social norms and cultural expectations (Beynon, 2002). In the Philippine context, Spanish and American colonial influences have reinforced masculine ideals centered on aggression and dominance (Canete, 2011). While some ideals emphasize respect and partnership with women, the coexistence of aggressive and patriarchal norms also plays a role in high rates of street harassment (Rubio & Green, 2009; Social Weather Stations, 2016). Whereas femininity has biological bases (childbirth, nurturance), masculinity rests on social

roles like provision and protection, which egalitarian shifts in gender roles have increasingly unsettled (Frederick et al., 2007).

Threats to masculine identity, especially when men feel their status is challenged, have been shown to increase harassment behaviors (Hindes & Fileborn, 2023) and are a precursor to more violent criminal behaviors (Herrera & McCarthy, 2023). This aligns with the Gender Stereotype Maintenance Model, where men use harassment to enforce traditional gender roles and avoid social backlash (Walton & Pedersen, 2022). Environmental factors also come into play. O'Hare and O'Donohue's (1998) theory highlights how settings with unprofessional or sexist norms can encourage harassment. Cultural and societal systems heavily influence male behavior, leading many men to see street harassment as an acceptable expression of masculinity (O'Hare & O'Donohue, 1998). This shows how social constructs of masculinity and the surrounding environment work together to shape behavior, making it harder to reduce harassment without addressing both.

Masculinity-related behaviors are linked to broader patterns of gender-based violence and are considered when assessing offender motivation and risk. The perception of masculinity influences how suspects are viewed by the criminal justice system; masculine traits often bias legal judgments, associating men more strongly with violent crimes, including harassment (Estrada-Reynolds, 2016). Understanding how masculinity shapes these behaviors helps in profiling offenders, explaining motivations, and developing targeted interventions. This review emphasizes street harassment as a specific form of gender-based aggression that requires serious attention. Many studies focus on victims and their experiences, but the perspectives and psychological profiles of perpetrators remain less explored (Hindes & Fileborn, 2023). Highlighting the characteristics of perpetrators influencing street harassment engagement offers insights into how specific predictors impact harassment frequency and may inform future prevention and reform programs.

Method

Design

This quantitative study employed a correlational research design (Johnson, 2001) to test relationships and predictions among variables. The survey method facilitated gathering of sizeable data efficiently while maintaining participant anonymity (Denscombe, 2010).

Participants

Participants comprised 270 heterosexual males from Cebu City schools, selected through convenience sampling: 35% (95) from the oldest private sectarian university, 25% (67) from the largely populated state university, 17% (47) from another private-sectarian university, and 23% (61) from unspecified institutions. Ages ranged 18 to 25 years (M = 19.68, SD = 1.74) with varied socio-economic backgrounds. Homosexual participants were excluded as they represent harassment victims rather than perpetrators (Franco, 2017). The age inclusion criteria reflected the adolescent boys' proneness to such behaviors (Robinson, 2005).

The academic distribution included Engineering (28%), Education (24.6%), Architecture, Fine Arts, and Design (19.4%), Arts and Sciences (14.2%), Health Care Professions (6.2%), with the remaining participants being out-of-school youths or enrolled in unspecified programs (7.6%). Questionnaire order distribution was as follows: Order 1 (26.1%), Order 2 (12.8%), Order 3 (19.9%), Order 4 (13.7%), Order 5 (27.5%), and Order 6 (17.4%).

Measures

Four established scales were adopted: (1) Street Harassment Scale (SHS) by Manalo et al. (2016); (2) Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) Scale by Pratto et al. (1994); (3) Moral Disengagement in Sexual Harassment Scale (MDiSH) by Page et al. (2016); and (4) Auburn Differential Masculinity Inventory by Burk et al. (2004). Scales were compiled into a 13-page questionnaire that included demographics such as age, school, course, and ID tracker. To control order effects where respondents properly answer initial items while neglecting later ones due to exhaustion, researchers employed the Balanced Latin Square Design, generating five different orders ("Latin Square Design…", 2017).

Street Harassment Frequency Scale. The Street Harassment Frequency Scale measures respondents' frequency of harassing behavior, adapted from Manalo et al.'s (2016) Street Harassment Scale, which originally measured victim experiences. Items were rephrased to gauge the effectiveness of the male harassment demonstration. Pilot testing with 60 respondents from the oldest private-sectarian university utilized a 27-item Likert Scale (0 = never, 6 = multiple times daily) exhibiting benign-to-severe and complimentary-to-hostile dimensions. SPSS version 23 analysis yielded Cronbach's Alpha of .91. Research proper yielded α = .96, indicating high internal consistency.

Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) Scale. The SDO was measured using Pratto et al.'s (1994) scale. SDO represents an individual's desire for in-group dominance or superiority

(Russell & Trigg, 2004), gauged as the likelihood to prefer inequality and hierarchy over other groups. This self-report Likert scale contains 16 items scored according to affective states (1 = very negative to 7 = very positive). The score range spans 16-112, where lower scores indicate lower SDO and higher scores indicate higher SDO. The current study's analysis showed good internal consistency, α = .80.

Moral Disengagement in Sexual Harassment Scale. The moral disengagement was assessed using Page et al.'s (2016) Moral Disengagement in Sexual Harassment Scale (MDiSH). This self-report instrument measures moral disengagement mechanisms in sexual harassment contexts, based on social-sexual behaviors relating to gender harassment and sexual harassment creating hostile environments. From the original 32-item Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree), researchers removed two workplace-specific items incongruent with street harassment: "In a workplace with a relaxed atmosphere, men cannot be blamed for 'trying it on' with attractive women when they get the chance" and "If a manager fails to discipline their staff, men should not be blamed for making sexual jokes at work," both involving legitimate authority roles inapplicable to street harassment. Original research across three studies yielded Cronbach's alpha values of α = .95, α = .97, and α = .98. The Current study achieved α = .94, signifying high internal consistency.

Auburn Differential Masculinity Scale. Masculinity was measured using the Auburn Differential Masculinity Scale (Burk et al., 2004), which was constructed to measure hypermasculinity component. This 5-point Likert scale (A = very much like me, E = not at all like me) contains five subscales: hypermasculinity, sexual identity, dominance and aggression, devaluation of emotion, and conservative masculinity. Higher scores indicate greater hypermasculinity agreement. Original researchers reported internal consistency coefficients of α = .83 (Study 1) and α = .85 (Study 2). The current research yielded an alpha of .89, indicating high internal consistency.

Procedure

The study modified Manalo et al.'s (2016) Street Harassment Scale into the Street Harassment Frequency Scale for measuring perpetrator perspective. Scale validation during the Thesis I phase included 60 respondents from the oldest private-sectarian university. The analysis of results showed good internal consistency and validity, prompting research continuation. Pilot testing assessed the research method and evaluated its feasibility for actual data collection.

This gender-sensitive research acknowledges males as perpetrators and females as victims. Considering potential participant bias upon recognizing the female researcher's gender (Katz, 2018), researchers employed a male research assistant to gather data. Convenience sampling was used to gather respondents from various schools in Cebu City. School access required letters from institutional heads explaining the study's purpose. Of 10 contacted schools, only 3 responded within the research timelines. After access approval, surveys were conducted in designated classrooms. Participation invitations and informed consents were presented first. After obtaining consent, the male research assistant briefed participants on the nature of the study. Participants received 30-60 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Questionnaires omitted participant names, using participant numbers as trackers, followed by four scales: SHFS, SDO, MDiSH, and ADMI. Scale labels were omitted to avoid response influence. Latin Balanced Square controlled order effects through scale sequence interchange depending on the questionnaire set. After completion, participants folded questionnaires and submitted them to the male research assistant. Debriefing followed, with monetary tokens provided for participation.

Data Analysis

Of 270 samples, 12 were discarded due to incomplete data or consistent neutral responses across scale items. Pilot study data, Order 6 (n = 47), were excluded from analysis. The remaining 211 samples were tested for multicollinearity and outliers. Four outliers, between 1.5 and -1.5 standard deviations from the sample mean (Participants 73, 208, 217, and 101), were retained, as Tabachnick and Fidell (2001, p. 122) define outliers as numbers three standard deviations away from the mean. Data analysis employed standard multiple regression to assess the independent variable's predictive value of dependent variables. Independent variables were entered simultaneously to assess predictive value. Nonetheless, the degrees of freedom (df) for the correlational-related inferences were established at 209 in this recent empirical investigation.

Ethical Considerations

Study records are maintained in strict confidentiality and anonymity. No published report information would enable participant identification. Data reporting used ID numbers instead of names. Data accessibility was limited to researchers unless participants requested access. Storage occurred in locked cabinets accessible only to researchers.

Researchers anticipated minimal participation risks. No physical, social, economic, or legal risks were foreseen; slight psychological risks might manifest as anxiety or discomfort due to the study nature. Participants could withdraw at anytime without affecting the researcher or university relationships. They retained the right to request non-use of information through the provided contact details.

Participants received a post-survey debriefing with assurance of complete data confidentiality. Compensation accompanied knowledge of contributing to gender and development studies.

Data Management

Researchers stored the gathered data in boxes within locked cabinets accessible only to them. Data remained private during ongoing research, without external sharing (parents, friends, other participants). Upon completion of the research, the data were shredded after the final manuscript was published.

Results

The current study explores how a male's frequency of engaging in street harassment behavior is effectively predicted by the presented predictor variables, his SDO, moral disengagement, and masculinity. The best predictor variable among the three is also examined.

Table 1.
Descriptive Statistics and Correlation of Street Harassment Frequency, Social Dominance Orientation, Moral Disengagement, and Masculinity among Male Students (N = 211).

Variables	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4
(1) Street Harassment Frequency	35.98	31.95	--	.33***	.31***	.35***
(2) Social Dominance Orientation	48.53	14.19		--	.25***	.33***
(3) Moral Disengagement	105.73	33.42			--	.27***
(4) Masculinity	111.55	28.99				--

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

The table above displays the mean scores and the standard deviation (*SD*) of all scale scores of the respondents. The results show that SDO among male students (*M* = 48.53, *SD* = 14.19) is relatively average, which suggests that male students may perceive an existing hierarchy among groups. Additionally, the moral disengagement among male students (*M* = 105.73, *SD* =

33.42) is relatively average, indicating that male students experience moral disengagement at a standard level when assessing their behaviors and decisions. Lastly, the level of masculinity in male students (M = 111.55, SD = 28.99) is also relatively average, indicating that male students moderately conform to hegemonic masculinity. Regarding the dependent variable, the frequency of male students engaging in street harassment behavior (M = 35.98, SD = 31.95) is relatively low, indicating that, on average, male students in the sample do not frequently engage in street harassment behavior.

In correlation analysis, all predictive variables were seen to be significantly correlated with the variable street harassment frequency. First, there is a significant positive moderate correlation between masculinity $r(209) = .353$, $p < .001$ and the frequency of engaging in street harassment behavior. This implies that when men conform to more masculine values, the likelihood that they will engage in street harassment behavior will increase. Similar results can also be observed in the variable moral disengagement. Masculinity also obtained the largest effect size among the independent variables. Second is SDO $r(209) = .329$, $p < .001$, where a significant, moderate positive correlation can be observed, indicating a relationship with the frequency of engaging in street harassment behavior. When men assert their social dominance, the likelihood of them harassing others also increases. Lastly, the moral disengagement variable $r(209) = .307$, $p < .001$ shows a moderate positive correlation with street harassment frequency. This means that when a male pushes past norms and his moral standards, he may be more inclined to engage in street harassment behavior. Multiple regression analysis was done to further understand the relationship between the variables. Results of the following analysis are discussed in the next section.

Multiple Regression Analysis

To assess how well the predictor variables predict the frequency of males engaging in street harassment behavior, the standard multiple regression analysis is employed. The resulting data is shown in the following table:

Table 2.
Summary of Standard Multiple Regression (N = 211).

Predictors	Frequency to Engage in Street Harassment		
(Constant)	β	*t*	ΔR^2
Social Dominance Orientation	.202	3.04**	.20
Moral Disengagement	.192	2.95**	
Masculinity	.234	3.49**	

Note: R^2 = .21, Adjusted R^2 = .197, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

The results of the data analysis have indicated that the model developed in the current study is significant, which means that the variables SDO, moral disengagement, and masculinity predict the frequency of a male to engage in street harassment behavior $F(3, 208) = 18.220$, $p < .01$. Given the reported value of the Adjusted R2, the predictor variables explain 20% of the variance in the dependent variable where SDO ($t = 3.040$, $p < .05$) ($SE = .150$), moral disengagement ($t = 2.950$, $p < .05$) ($SE = .062$) and masculinity ($t = 3.493$, $p < .05$) ($SE = .074$) yielded significant contributions. Among the three (3) predictor variables in this model, the variable masculinity (β = 0.234) gave the strongest unique contribution in explaining the dependent variable.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to determine whether social dominance, moral disengagement, and masculinity predict street harassment, and to identify which of these predictor variables has the greatest significant impact on street harassment prevalence. The results of the study supported the main hypothesis and all the sub-hypotheses of the paper. However, it did not exactly follow the Four-Factor Theory of Sexual Harassment by O'Hare and O'Donohue (1998). The said theory required a step-by-step process for a male to follow in engaging with sexual harassment behavior, something which was not followed in the results of the current study, given that the supposedly third factor of O'Hare and O'Donohue's theory came in as the first and highest predictor.

Masculinity is the best predictor of street harassment prevalence (see Table 2). Implications of masculinity as the best predictor of street harassment do not support the hierarchical logic of

O'Hare and O'Donohue's (1998) framework. Instead, it provided empirical support to another model, the Three-factor Model Explanation of Sexual Harassment (Diehl, 2014). This model proposes that motivation, enabling process, and legitimizing process interact in a mediating and moderating fashion to execute sexual harassment. As stipulated in the model, motivation can be driven by power (i.e., dominance and control) or sex. The legitimizing process includes the usage of myths of sexual harassment to dismiss sexual harassment as a social problem, and the enabling process (e.g., permissive norms) shows similar conceptualizations of the external facilitation of the present study.

According to the Three-Factor Model, motivation alone is not sufficient for a behavior to be executed (Diehl, 2014). Certain opportunities should be present first before motivation is strengthened and eventually guides the execution of behavior. These opportunities include permissive local norms or a lack of external inhibitors (Diehl, 2014). The Three-factor Model and the Four-factor theory both refer to these external inhibitors as explicit rules or the presence of authority figures. Unlike in the workplace, where regulations, rules, and authorities are present, in the streets, no person can provide direct sanctions for street harassment. This is expected, as street harassment is often regarded as a fleeting phenomenon and is typically perpetrated by mostly anonymous individuals (Walton & Pedersen, 2022). In this sense, masculinity acted out as the permissive force leading to the execution of street harassment.

Masculinity, as an external facilitator, is a social gender script in which males comply accordingly. A series of studies (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004) showed that men who do not perform according to their gender stereotype are punished socially. Therefore, masculinity acted out as the permissive force leading to the execution of street harassment. Certain ideologies have been associated with the male gender, which have been emphasized to a person by their peers and family members since they were young (Fagot et al., 1992). For example, in the Philippines, values such as strength, aggressiveness, and patriarchal ideals are expected of Filipino men (De Chavez & Pacheco, 2020). Ideologies and traits, such as those previously stated, are commonly adopted by males to enhance their masculine identity and identify more closely with their in-group. Additionally, dominance and immodesty are prime features in the prescribed masculine gender role (Gutierrez, 2019). A study conducted by Hunt and Gonsalkorale (2013) found that men high in conformity to masculine norms executed gender harassment when situated with an encouraging peer. In other words, immodesty (i.e., gender harassment) was enacted to show dominance and conform to a gender stereotype. The current

study also showed similar results to the aforementioned concept, where masculinity and social dominance produced the highest effect size with positive correlation (see Table 1).

Social dominance is a trait characterized by individuals who score high on the SDO scale exhibit a preference for hierarchy within their group over others (Tilly, 2001). The Social Dominance Theory suggests that individuals high in social dominance are found to maintain belief systems, such as sexist beliefs or racist presumptions, in order to maintain the hierarchy of their group over others (Rollero et al., 2021). Expectedly, most research presents social dominance as predictive of sexist beliefs (Kelly et al., 2015). Beliefs in sexism are likewise found to be predictive of a tolerance for sexual harassment (Fox & Tang, 2014). Additionally, a 2004 study found that SDO predicted tolerance of sexual harassment, although it accounted for only 1% of the total variance (Russell & Trigg, 2004). In the current study, SDO accounted for 3.53% of the total variance and ranked second in terms of its unique contribution to street harassment (see Table 2).

It is difficult to fathom that a power play could still exist in public places such as the streets in an era that promotes equality among groups (Frederick et al., 2007). However, the streets are still largely considered a man's domain (Franco, 2017). Therefore, the streets, like the workplace, are conducive to power dynamics, where it follows that harassment is often used to maintain the in-group's social hierarchy over the out-group. Giuliani and Campbell-Meiklejohn (2025) indicate that men tend to have higher levels of SDO compared to women. However, the biological foundation of social dominance was found to be inconclusive (Tilly, 2001). Such is a counter-argument to the current study's contention.

In contrast, men are taught to dominate and control to satisfy society's dictates of normal behavior for men (Franco, 2017). For example, men are expected to be tough and show less emotion, and male aggression is rewarded in the domains of mating and romance (Stanaland & Gaither, 2021). Normalization and even reinforcement of such detrimental behaviors strengthen gender stereotypes, which eventually leads to sexism, and as previously mentioned, sexism is correlated with social dominance (Pratto et al, 1994).

Notice that the reinforcement and normalization of these behaviors is more of a social construction rather than a biological explanation of why men harass. Therefore, social influence can affect an individual who, at their genesis, never fathoms engaging in street harassment. An example of this would be the personal experience of Berkowitz (2002), where, back in his

adolescence, he often heard his friends badmouth and use foul words to describe women and their attributes. He further stated that he kept his discomfort to himself, assuming that the others enjoyed or did not mind having such a conversation. The misperception later enables the individual to justify their behavior as normal, a clear manifestation of one of the mechanisms of moral disengagement (Page et al., 2016).

Moral disengagement follows the concept of Cognitive Dissonance. The theory of Cognitive Dissonance posits that people dislike inconsistency in their thoughts and actions. When there is a discrepancy between one's thoughts or actions, the individual seeks to eliminate dissonance by changing one's attitude, belief, or perception concerning the action (Festinger, 1962). In a similar vein, moral disengagement addresses inconsistencies, but more specifically within the domain of morality. The dissonance in moral disengagement is evident in one's self-concept and the immoral act, where immoral acts are performed due to external influences and interpersonal factors (Page et al., 2016). The dissonance is then eliminated through the application of moral reasoning using the eight mechanisms discussed in the literature.

Moral disengagement produced the least predictability to the DV (see Table 2). This is rather expected, seeing that social dominance and masculinity have a higher positive correlation compared to other pairings of the independent variables (see Table 1). When an individual is high in social dominance and high in masculine identity, it follows that they have a lesser cognitive dissonance than those with low dominance and masculinity. Bandura (2002) argues that social (i.e., masculinity) and interpersonal factors (i.e., social dominance) come into play when it comes to sanctions of dissonant morality and actions. According to him, an individual who seeks to violate his moral agency does not morally disengage only to satisfy one's self-concept of being morally good, but also because the social punishments weigh a greater magnitude than the self-sanctions. The relationship between masculinity and social dominance is evident in the results, where moral disengagement and social dominance exhibit a weaker correlation compared to moral disengagement and masculinity.

Somehow, moral disengagement is used more when masculinity is high, since an individual who tries to conform to a certain masculine ideology may do so not because he wants to (i.e., inherent motivation to dominate) but because he needs to for fear of the backlash effect in defying the prescribed masculine gender role (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). Bandura (1999) also contends that due to moral disengagement, an individual can exhibit contradictory behaviors simultaneously toward different groups depending on the individual's group identification. As

previously mentioned, deviance from one's gender norm produces social costs that eventually drive the individual to maintain the stereotype, even when maintening such a stereotype is damaging to oneself (Moss-Racusin et al., 2010).

Although moral disengagement produces the least value for predictability, it remains a significant predictor of street harassment (see Table 2). Sherman and Cohen (2006) argue that maintenance of one's self-integrity is paramount in the self-affirmation theory. Therefore, an individual who believes himself to be good sees doing an immoral act as a threat to his self-integrity. This suggests that an individual who seeks to commit an immoral act employs disengagement from their morality. Moral disengagement occurs to relieve oneself from the discomfort of the inconsistencies. In support of this claim, Detert et al. (2008) conducted a series of surveys to identify the antecedents and outcomes of moral disengagement by examining the population's differences in attitudes towards moral disengagement. This said, the study found that moral disengagement acts as a mediator between an immoral act and individual differences. These results suggest that a person's traits, such as integrity, may influence their engagement in immoral acts. However, due to the concept of moral disengagement, individuals may still commit immoral acts despite their personal traits. The mediating role of moral disengagement appears to transcend the context of street harassment. Studies examining adolescent bullying behavior have demonstrated that individuals who engage in bullying activities similarly exhibit elevated levels of moral disengagement, coupled with diminished empathic responses and reduced self-regulatory capacity (Lesmana et al., 2025). These convergent findings across different forms of aggressive behavior support the notion that moral disengagement serves as a universal cognitive strategy, facilitating the perpetration of harmful acts while preserving the individual's moral self-image. A similar idea is also argued in the concept of sexual harassment studies, whereby individuals who commit such acts are normal individuals without any psychological or personality disorders (Ramadan, 2018).

Overall, with masculinity affecting a male to show dominance, thereby influencing their inherent motivation to dominate, the use of moral disengagement happens either way. There will always be conflict despite having a high SDO or consistent belief and practice of hegemonic masculinity. A conflict of the self due to one's own belief of being morally sound or due to the pressure to conform to a certain masculine standard exists. Hence, the use of moral disengagement is preordained. Bandura (2002) argues that the use of moral disengagement is gradual, where "...level of ruthlessness increases, until eventually acts originally regarded as

abhorrent can be performed with little anguish or self-censure" (p. 110). Dismissing the issue of harassment, discrimination, and/or similar concepts as menial, especially by authorities and people high in the social hierarchy, incurs expensive costs to acceptable humane acts that the norms of one's culture uphold.

Implications

Street harassment is a phenomenon that poses a great problem not just towards women but towards both men and women as a whole. One of the most common misconceptions in gender studies, particularly about women as a minority group, is the "men vs. women" concept. Indeed, men do get sexually harassed as well, but no reports of men being street harassed are documented (Franco, 2017). Additionally, the statistics of such cases are incomparable to those experienced by women and men who belong to the LGBTQ community or deviate from traditional masculinity (Vitelli, 2015). However, in the current study, it is highly emphasized that the focus is on the perspective of the male harasser. By examining the harasser's perspective, this study yields theoretical and practical implications.

Theoretical Implications. The study provided an insightful perspective on male harassers engaging in street harassment behavior. In this sense, the literature of street harassment, gender harassment, or harassment as a whole is now supplied with data of harassment from a male's perspective. Preliminary empirical support for the Three-factor model, as well as a basic framework for street harassment, was also provided by the study's findings, which revealed that the enabling process of the Three-factor model differed from the present study's external facilitation (Diehl, 2014). Support for the model suggests a multifaceted interaction among the variables, rather than a staged interaction, as in O'Hare and O'Donohue's framework (1998). The study showed support for the social side of people's behavior, further establishing the potency of social influence in decision-making. This guides future research, whether pure or applied, in influencing the establishment of social reforms in terms of how we interact with societal gender stereotypes and expectations.

Practical Implications. The study's findings provided valuable insights into the prevalence of certain factors in males who engage in street harassment behavior. These findings would help establish a benchmark for identifying and recognizing street harassment behavior and perpetrators, thereby increasing awareness in the general society. Through this awareness, methods for dealing with a harasser would become accessible to many people, and eventually

to everyone. This could be achieved by establishing laws and local ordinances in every country and city that address street harassment, or through awareness seminars in various public and private schools. In fact, cities like Manila and Quezon have established ordinances against street harassment (Corrales, 2018). However, it is essential to note that the awareness process would be a gradual one, as some individuals may not agree with every statement. Nonetheless, the findings gathered suggested support for the hypothesis, the first step towards awareness. In addition, issues like biased ideas on gender superiority and inequality, dominant status, and the external environment as an influencer of a perpetrator were addressed.

Limitations and future research suggestions

Despite the rigid control in methods and measures, the study still contained limitations that should be acknowledged. The study's construct of interest may result in various ethical and methodological limitations that need careful consideration. Firstly, examining people who engage in harassment or gendered violence may reduce, rationalize, or deny their behaviors through various cognitive mechanisms and impression management strategies that distort actual behavior (Walsh & Stephenson, 2023). The stigma surrounding street harassment may lead respondents to underreport their experiences, as they fear social judgment or legal consequences, despite assurances of anonymity (Singh & Tir, 2023). Thus, multiple data sources, such as archival reports and interviews, should be collected to compare results and limit social desirability effects (Smyth et al., 2024).

The study utilized self-report measures, which may compromise the integrity of the results, as these measures are susceptible to social desirability bias. Social desirability bias occurs when individuals modify their actions or behavior to align with what society deems desirable. Earlier in the research process, the study employed a Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960) in an attempt to control for the social desirability bias. However, the scale during reliability analysis failed to garner a good internal consistency, and thus, it was excluded. Had it been assured that social desirability had been controlled, the results of this study could be more representative and may garner a stronger, rather than average, effect size. Future research should employ experimental designs, such as the Implicit Association Test, to measure harassment proclivity.

The study also employed a male research assistant, who had a minimal impact on the results. The results still showed a low frequency of street harassment. A plausible cause of such a discrepancy is the research environment of the present study. The research environment was a

school setting, which commonly upholds socially desirable behaviors. According to Wesselman and Kelly (2010), the school setting may restrict the expression of street harassment engagement. Additionally, women in urban areas are documented to experience a much higher rate of street harassment compared to those residing in other places (Randa et al., 2023). Therefore, the environment plays a significant role in influencing a person's behavior. Future studies should be conducted in neutral environments such as laboratories. With this, results could also improve to include a stronger causation analysis.

In addition, due to time constraints, not all factors were explored that may help elucidate the phenomenon of street harassment. Future research may focus solely on the motivation to street harass and investigate the role of sexual attractiveness and power, and examine the combination of the three motivations as presented in the Four-factor theory in facilitating the perpetration of street harassment (O'Hare & O'Donohue, 1998). This is plausible, given that some literature suggests that street harassment may be a way to attract a woman or a form of flirting (Popovice et al., 1996). However, the direction of present research points to dominance as the prime motivation in sexual and street harassment; hence, the study excluded sexual attractiveness (Pina et al., 2009). To add, physical attractiveness as a motivation in O'Hare and O'Donohue's (1998) study was also nonsignificant. Future research should also adequately address the motivation and facilitating factors of men who choose not to harass or are not prone to harassing. Studying their motivation, socio-demographic backgrounds, and belief systems will provide valuable comparative insights into the present literature. Lastly, researchers' confirmatory bias is of concern as this could influence how the study's data is analyzed and interpreted (Parkinson, 2022). These assumptions may manifest through selective attention to confirmatory evidence, potentially compromising the validity of data interpretation. Nevertheless, the researchers of this study have taken necessary steps to limit the effects of such biases (Smith & Noble, 2025).

Conclusion

The results of this study offer important insights into how SDO, moral disengagement, and masculinity collectively influence street harassment behaviors among male students. Notably, masculinity emerged as the strongest predictor, suggesting that adherence to traditional masculine norms significantly increases the likelihood of engaging in such behavior. In real-world contexts like public streets, absent strict oversight or immediate consequences, masculinity acts as the enabling social force that encourages harassment, supported by

ingrained cultural values of dominance and aggression, particularly in patriarchal societies like the Philippines. These findings underscore the role of social and psychological constructs in driving criminal behavior such as street harassment.

The study also highlights how moral disengagement serves as a cognitive strategy allowing individuals to bypass internal conflict and justify harmful actions while maintaining their self-image. This disconnect between moral standards and behavior complicates intervention efforts but offers clear targets for prevention, such as challenging damaging masculine ideals and social dominance beliefs. Recognizing street harassment as part of broader power dynamics, rather than isolated acts, allows forensic professionals to better understand offender motivations and design more effective rehabilitation and prevention programs that address both individual cognition and social context.

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