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Men and masculinities in a globalising Viet Nam

Ha Noi 2020

SUPPORTED BY



INVESTING IN WOMEN
SMART ECONOMICS
AN INITIATIVE OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT



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> Foreword



Australia regards the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment as a critical dimension of its partnership with Vietnam. Vietnam has made significant progress in recent years in promoting women's status and rights across the country. In the past decade alone, Vietnam has introduced first-time legislation and strategic targets to accelerate progress towards equality in leadership and the economy, and to address gender-based violence. It has used its multilateral engagement to sponsor important resolutions on women, peace and security, and conducted communication campaigns to raise popular awareness of gender equality.

However, globally, the onset of COVID-19 in 2020 has underlined the extent of gender divides in the economy and at home. The pandemic has highlighted women's status as 'secondary workers' in households, with many working part time and without social insurance coverage. School closures and 'home isolation' measures have also increased women's unpaid domestic roles. In times of crisis, traditional responses tend to come to the fore, and these can pose challenges to many of the achievements made in women's status and role in society. COVID 19 has highlighted how more negotiation is needed between men and women for gender equality to be achieved.

The Australian Government is therefore pleased to have supported the Institute for Social Development Studies (ISDS) in Vietnam on this ground-breaking research, *Men and Masculinities in a Globalizing Vietnam*, co-funded by Vietnam's National Foundation for Science and Technology. Australia's support has been provided under our Investing in Women Initiative – which catalyses economic growth through women's economic empowerment in South East Asia.

This research, which explores men's views on gender equality and social expectations, comes at a critical time.

This is the first large-scale study on men and masculinities in Vietnam. It was conducted with over 2,500 working-age men, living in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Khanh Hoa, and Hoa Binh.

The research asks some important questions: What do Vietnamese men think about gender equality? How do norms and stereotypes about masculinity influence men's actions? The findings provide insights into how these norms and stereotypes shape society's, expectations of

Vietnamese men, how this affects men's engagement with women in the economic sphere, and flow on effects on gender equality and economic opportunity for women.

Importantly, the study also identifies opportunities for positive change. Urbanisation, educational achievements and improved economic conditions can all lead to shifts in gender norms. This can help ensure that perceptions of masculinity do not hold either women or men back from achieving their full potential. This research stands to make a contribution to policy and intervention that improves the quality of life for both men and women, while building collective effort to promote gender equality and the advancement of women's economic empowerment in Vietnam.

Australian Ambassador to Vietnam, H.E Robyn Mudie

Acknowledgement

This report is based on the research project “Men and Masculinities in a globalising Viet Nam” carried out by the Institute for Social Development Studies between 2018 and 2020.

The Institute for Social Development Studies (ISDS) is a Vietnamese non-profit, non-governmental organisation established in 2002 under the Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Association (VUSTA). ISDS’s activities include research, advocacy, consultancy, training, community development, and public education. It enjoys a national reputation as a pioneer in research and advocacy on gender in Viet Nam and for its commitment to apply academic knowledge to address national challenges leading to positive changes in the society.

The project would not have been possible without support from a number of agencies, organizations and individuals.

First of all, we would like to express our gratitude to The National Foundation for Science and Technology Development (NAFOSTED) and Investing in Women (IW) for their generous financial support for this project.

NAFOSTED was founded by the Decree 122/2003/NĐ-CP of the Government of Viet Nam to implement funding and support for science and technology projects proposed by organisations and individuals at the national levels. NAFOSTED aims to create a favorable research environment that meet international standards in order to enhance national science and technology capacity, including improving the research quality and developing high-quality human resources in science and technology.

Investing in Women (IW), an initiative of the Australian Government, catalyses inclusive economic growth through women’s economic empowerment in South East Asia.

IW uses innovative approaches to improve women’s economic participation as employees and as entrepreneurs in the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Myanmar through:

- Workplace Gender Equality (WGE) – IW supports Business Coalitions who work with influential businesses on shifting workplace cultures, practices and policy barriers to achieve WGE;
- Impact Investment for Women’s SMEs – IW partners with Impact Investors and ecosystem builders to expand market opportunities for women, with a view to incentivising and catalysing access to capital for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) – led by and responsive to the needs of women; and
- Influencing Gender Norms – IW works with partners to positively shift attitudes and practices to support women in the world of work.

In collaboration with corporations and business leaders, impact investors, entrepreneurs and advocates, IW is working with those who are driving change for women's economic equality in the region.

The project team would also like to thank the experts, colleagues and friends in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city, for spending many hours to share with us their insightful thoughts and experience on various aspects of the life of Vietnamese men as well as critical gender norms and issues that influence men's perspectives in the country.

Also we would like to sincerely express our thankfulness for the great support from the local authorities and especially from the provincial/city and district Fatherland Fronts of the 20 research districts in Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh city, Khanh Hoa and Hoa Binh; as well as the local collaborators in over 80 research sites. With their credibility in the locality and their enthusiastic commitment in this project, they were indeed the vital bridges between the research team and the individual participants in every location, even the remote and challenging ones.

Specially, we would like to pay our deep gratitude to 2,567 men and numbers of women in Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh city, Khanh Hoa, and Hoa Binh for having accepted us into their house and for opening up to us about their life and in-depth perceptions. Their active participation, generosity, and honesty are undoubtedly what make this study valuable and successful.

Finally, we would like to extend our special thanks to our colleagues - senior sociologists and social researchers namely: Nguyen Thi Van, Le Thi Phuong, Nguyen Thi Tuyet Minh, Nguyen Thi Thanh Mai, Le Thi Dan and Nguyen Dang Minh Thao and the great team of interviewers who contributed their excellent expertise to collect data in study sites and help with data cleaning and entry.

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Executive summary

Gender equality promotion requires new approaches that place men at the centre

The enormous effort promoting women's empowerment and gender equality has brought significant achievements in Viet Nam. However, women still make up only a small portion in leadership in all levels, they are still bound to double responsibilities, they are discriminated in the workplace, and they are victims to violence both in the home and in public. To shift such reality requires a new approach targeting both women and men. There must be social policies and programmes aimed at changing the gender norms and behaviours of men. These policies and programmes need to be backed up by evidence from social research on men, their beliefs, behaviors, expectations, and challenges.

In order to address the aforementioned issue and inform the social policies and programmes of the new approach, the Institute for Social Development Studies, with fundings from NAFOSTED and Investing In Women, has conducted this research with the hope to (1) contribute to bridging the gap in academic study on men and masculinities, and (2) provide evidence for the design of policies and interventions with a men-centred approach to promote gender equality.

A research study based on social constructionist and feminist perspectives

Masculinity is socially constructed through a cultural interaction process, in which men are shaped by the gender norms of men, and at the same time they sustain these norms and create new ones. Masculine norms, however, are not a single constructive mechanism but always interact with multiple other aspects of men such as age, education, income, religion, and family background, which then leads to a variety of versions of masculinity. Therefore, the experience of masculinity is not uniform and not universal for all men in society. Different groups of men experience and practice different version of masculinity and the differences between the versions can be huge depend on the socio-economic and political contexts where they live and on the different stages of their lives.

This study intends to find out what it means to become a man, what masculine norms and stereotypes are involved in the ‘construction’ of men, and the meaning of that process in the life of Vietnamese men. Specifically, this study aims to answer these following questions: (i) What does it mean to be a man in the Vietnamese society? (ii) What do Vietnamese men think about women and men and gender equality, (iii) What factors shape and/or influence the masculinity in Viet Nam?, (iv) What masculine norms and stereotypes forge harmful gendered practices of men? and (v) What masculine norms and stereotypes nurture positive gendered practices of men?

This is the first large-scale study on men and masculinities in Viet Nam conducted with 2567 men in the age range from 18 to 64 years old who are living Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh city, Khanh Hoa, and Hoa Binh. The research findings have provided valuable knowledge on various aspects of the life of Vietnamese men, especially on how they are internalised and confined within the rigid traditional gender norms many of which negatively influencing their perception and behaviours. These findings will contribute to the design of more effective interventions to create more positive changes contributing to the improvement of the quality of men’s life, as well as to better involve the active participation of men in the collective effort to promote gender equality.

Key Findings

Vietnamese men – a social profile

Work is the focus in the life of a man and is strongly associated with masculine norms, especially the expectations resulting from the role as the family’s pillar of men. Success or failure in a man’s career dictates his pride and could pose huge negative impacts on his physical

and mental health state, as well as his quality of life in general. Low income, few promotion opportunities, poor work condition, and the shortage of employment opportunities among young men with high educational attainment are the problems causing serious pressures on a great number of Vietnamese men. Most Vietnamese men are in favour of ‘traditional’ jobs, such as government officers or members of the police/army force, that are closely connected to the tradition of ‘studying to be a mandarin’ in the long past feudalist Viet Nam society. Younger people, however, prefer ‘modern’ kinds of job to the traditional ones, such as in IT, finance/banking, communication, and marketing.

Insight: *Policies on labour and employment need to pay attention to the association between work and masculinity to reduce men’s stress and mental health issues and to encourage men to achieve a balance between work and family life. For example, the policies and enforcement can be improved to provide full salary for a father off of work to take care of a sick child or flexible working time so men can share housework and other caring tasks with their spouses. Good social insurance and social welfare schemes could help reducing the pressure of temporary unemployment. There should also be policies and services supporting young men to find jobs, especially men from rural areas. Newly-wed couples and young families with small children should also be supported.*

Men are facing some concerning health issues, especially mental health, and these are closely associated with masculine norms.

Men’s health is conditioned not only by biological factors, but also cultural and social factors, especially those factors which shape their norms of masculinity. The findings of the research revealed that Vietnamese men do not have the habit of frequent healthchecks. Men are currently facing some mental health issues, and one of the most alarming potential causes is the pressure related to work and their role as the ‘family’s pillar’, especially in the young age group and in men with higher educational attainment. Men in the middle-age groups are often under pressure of earning enough to cover costs of bringing up of their children and to pay education fees which are increasingly expensive. Urban men have to deal with mental health issues of the modern lifestyle such as feeling down, lonely, and disappointed. This issue appears to occur more to the young generation. To have suicidal thoughts and have attempted to commit suicide is also a perturbing problem in the 18-29 year-old men group. According to national statistics, the rate of suicide in men is higher than that in women and has continued to rise in recent years.¹ Traffic accidents is one of the many factors influencing the health of many men.

Having sex early, and having unsafe sex and with multiple partners are some issues in the men’s sexual health. This study has found that 15% of men entered their sex life before the age

1 <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/VNM/vietnam/suicide-rate>

of 18, which is higher compared to the rate of 13.6% recorded in SAVY 2 in 2009. The first sex could happen at as young as 11 years old. One in every three men have sex with those who are not their wife or sexual partners, and this occurs more frequently in middle-aged men. In every 10 men who have extramarital sex, four (4) reported not using condoms.

Men have harmful practices that pose threats to their health and personal development.

Smoking and drinking to drunkenness are found to be quite common practices of Vietnamese men. Young men are more likely to engage in risk behaviours. In every 10 men aged 18-29, five have ever and/or currently are smoking, six have ever drunk alcohol to drunkenness, and four have ever violated the administrative laws. Drunk driving, not wearing a helmet while driving, and crossing a red light are popular acts of traffic violations found in men, mostly in the 18-29 age group.



Insight: *Many health issues and harmful practices of men are associated with biased masculine norms. The COVID-19 outbreak with high death rate of men is strong evidence of this connection. Therefore, improving men's health should not include medical interventions alone. Shifting gender-biased norms that condition harmful practices and risk behaviours must be key interventions to be taken. Young men need to be supported to build a healthy lifestyle and positive behaviours through facilitation of more gender equality norms and practices.*

Men spend time for their issues of interest and hobbies: Young men are interested in new technologies (especially digital technology), international news, and social issues. Older men, nonetheless, follow more news on domestic politics and the economy, environmental issues, climate change, and law enforcement. Many men, especially the young men in urban areas, spend time and money playing sports and doing physical exercise. Young men engage in the 'modern' hobbies more such as going to the gym, body building, playing computer games, and travelling, while older men prefer the 'traditional' hobbies including playing chess and raising bonsais/birds/fish.



Insight: *This represents an opportunity for creative and attractive communication campaigns to promote changes encouraging healthful lifestyles, and positive gender attitudes and practices. These communications could be integrated into the entertainment activities of urban men.*

Men actively take part in social life, which is their strategy to increase social capital and access diverse social resources. Nonetheless, as shown by other studies, men gathering could

also be the venues where the traditional gender biased norms are strengthened, and harmful practices are perpetuated. Men with higher educational attainment tend to participate more in social-political organisations compared to those with lower educational attainment. Urban men are more active in the career groups/clubs than their rural counterparts. Men under 40 years old join in hobby groups more, whereas over 40-year-old men prefer peer groups. Drinking alcohol and smoking are common among 18-29 year old men during their meet-ups/gatherings.

Insight: *The social networks that men participate in can be the venue where negative masculine norms are reinforced and harmful practices such as drinking and smoking take place. However, the same venues and peer networks can be good channels to introduce and facilitate positive gender norms and practices.*

Gender Socialization

Exposure to violence and to the norms and practices of gender inequality during childhood strengthen traditional masculine norms among men. The research found that many men were exposed as young boys to the gender-biased norms through education from adults and from witnessing gender-biased practices in their family and community. As young boys, they saw their mother and other women shoulder most housework and caring tasks without or with minimal help from their fathers and other adult men. When they were young boys few of them helped doing housework. During their childhood, many men were victims of violence perpetrated by adults in their own family or in the community. They also often witnessed violence in their family where the victims were mainly women. Research findings also indicate the masculine norms that men were exposed to during childhood predict their current gender norms.

Insight: *Positive gender socialization should be introduced in early childhood. While changing their family and the community surrounding children takes time, school and media should become key channels in communication and education of positive ideas and gender equality norms.*

Gender inequality is manifested in many aspects of men's family life. Although the tendency of co-ownership of family assets is becoming more popular, compared to women, men are more likely the sole owners of property/assets in many families, and this is more common in rural areas. Young men have fewer assets, but they intend to share ownership with their wives. Men are the decision makers for important issues in many families while women decide for daily living activities. The tendency of making decisions together happens more in young urban families. The 'traditional' labour-division in the family continues to be prevalent where women

shoulder most “internal” tasks including household chores and caring for family members while men undertake “external” tasks such as representing the family in the community or kinship events. Young men in urban areas, nevertheless, are more likely to share housework and caring activities. Men are more likely to commit physical and mental violence against their wives/partners; however the issue of men being physically and mentally abused by their wives/partners has also been found among men aged 18-29.

Insight: *These findings are not new, they reaffirm the findings of previous studies and show that shifting gender norms and practices toward more equal ones is challenging work and takes time, and changing gender labour division in the family is the hardest part and requires diverse and innovative interventions.*

Opportunity: *The norms and practices supporting gender equality have been observed in young men, especially among urban men. They are willing to share the ownership of property/assets with their wives, to discuss and make decisions together about important matters in the family, and undertake more household work and caring tasks. Intervention programs to encourage these practices may start with young urban men before scaling up to other groups of men.*

Typical characteristics of Vietnamese men and “a true man”

Typical characteristics of Vietnamese men in men’s thoughts include both positive and negative sides. In term of positive sides, men always place their family in the centre of their life playing their role as its pillar and striving for a stable life of their family by doing jobs that bring good income so that they can ensure the future of their children. Other positive qualities of men include paying filial piety to their parents, and being responsible toward people around them. On the other side, Vietnamese men have been portrayed as patriarchal, ‘being obsessed about keeping face’, and ‘liking to gather and drink’.

The notion of a ‘true man’ fits completely with the traditional stereotypes of men. *Regarding his career*, a true man prioritises his career, values education and degrees, strives to become a member of the Communist Party and have high position in the government, occupies a highly-skilled job, and tries to become a leader and the decision maker. *In terms of capability and personality*, the true man has a strong body, is competent in using modern technology, has wide social networks, has a strong and decisive mannerism, dares to take risks and challenges, is mentally strong and does not show weakness, and knows to drink alcohol well. *In regards to sexuality*, the true man has strong a sexual ability, has rich sexual experiences, is always the one who initiates and leads in sexual activities. *On family duties*, the true man is married and having children, and is the family’s pillar who earns enough to provide for his wife and children, and is responsible for ancestor worshipping.

Insight: *These findings are very interesting and important both academically and pragmatically, and need to be investigated in-depth in future studies on men and masculinities in Viet Nam. It appears that ‘a true man’ is a version of the hegemonic masculinity in the contemporary Vietnamese society. The traditional norms on a ‘true man’ need to be changed to free men from the norms that are causing burden for themselves and posing barriers for the advancement of women and gender equality.*

Gender expectations and stereotypes

The common expectations of women revolve around their primary role as a housewife and caretaker. In terms of their roles, women are expected to do housework, take care of their family, be the strong support for their husband’s career growth, to accept suffering and sacrifice to keep their family happy, to prioritise caring for family over striving for career, to dedicate fully to a husband’s family, to satisfy a husband sexually, to do simple and easy work, and to be modest in a manner to avoid attracting attention from other men. In terms of capability, women are believed to be too emotional and inconsistent in work and incapable of working under high pressure. In terms of their sexuality, women are no longer condemned for extramarital affairs or having multiple sexual partners, but they are blamed for being sexually harassed or abused.

Men prefer a wife with traditional qualities. A good wife is ‘willing to suffer and sacrifice for the family’, ‘always listens and agrees with husband’, ‘devotes more time to family, and is ‘hardworking and handles housework well.’ Although the traditional gender norms are still common among Vietnamese men, there is a shift toward more positive perceptions among young men and urban men. In all three aspects of women’s capability, emotional relationships, and family and sexual life, the younger the man, the less biased he is against women and the less influenced he is by gender norms.

The common expectations of men are strongly linked to their superiority. These are beliefs that centre around men’s roles and capability, their position in the family, and their relationships with women, specifically men’s accepted conduct and men’s sexuality. Regarding men’s role and capability, men are believed to be better leaders than women, better at politics than women, more competent than women, and the main decision makers. Regarding men’s accepted conduct: it is understandable and acceptable for men to have affairs outside marriage, and it is normal for men to have multiple sexual partners and to flirt with women.

Men’s attitude and expectations toward their sons and daughters are also rooted in their gender-biased norms. Son preference is still popular among men as they are still holding the belief in the irreplaceable role of sons in ancestor worshipping, continuing the family lineage, and caring for parents at old age. For their sons, men prioritise education and jobs that bring high income. For their daughters, priorities are family and jobs that bring less pressure and allow more time for the family. Men intend to give land and house equally to sons and daughters but one-fifth intend to give these assets only to sons or mainly to sons.

Positive sign: *Younger men in the two age groups of 18-29 and 30-39 and men with higher education level are less likely to value these traditional qualities than men of older age groups and those in groups with lower education levels.*

Men understand what gender equality is and can articulate the concept with examples, but say it is hard to achieve in reality and admit that not all of them practise it in their families.

Younger men tend to appreciate the importance of gender equality more and are more likely to practise it in their families. Very few men reported having good knowledge of three gender-related laws namely Law on Gender Equality, Law on Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence, and Law on Marriage and Family.

Insight: *The beliefs and stereotypes of men and women are deeply rooted in the biological essentialist point of view that capability, personality, quality, and conducts of men and women are predetermined by nature and are unchangeable. What is concerning is that these norms are prevalent across all social groups of men and persist in the thoughts of generations of men in Viet Nam, and continue to pose harm to men and women, and hinder the effort of gender equality promotion.*

To shift these traditional gender-biased norms is not easy and requires long amounts of time, as biological essentialism is the dominant point of view in official educational philosophy and social science in Viet Nam and has rarely been challenged. This view is also widely diffused in popular culture and reinforced everyday by mass media and in public communications. Thus, superiority and privileges of men over women, as well as gender inequality are seen as inevitability, and thus are widely accepted.

Changing the gender norms and stereotypes that men are holding is possible

This study has pointed out that the notion of a “true man” and traditional gender norms negatively affect attitudes and behaviours of men. Those who are in favour of the notion of a ‘true man’ and traditional gender norms are more likely to hold gender-biased attitudes or engage in gender inequality practices such as son preference, controlling and violence against their wives/partners, forcing sexual activities on their wives/partners, and engaging in risk behaviours such as drinking to drunkenness, smoking, gambling, and using violence to handle conflicts.

This study has also identified opportunities for changes: Urban living, high educational attainment, improved economic condition, and globalisation are factors that can lessen gender norms and the notion of a ‘true man’, as well as risk behaviours.

To conclude, findings of this research suggest that shifting gender norms will go along with socio-economic progress and take a long time. Nevertheless, interventions focusing on young

urban men with high education attainment who are beneficiaries and agents of globalisation may bring positive results which will be then diffused to other social groups. As gender norms are binary, to shift norms on one gender would also lead to changes in the norms on the other gender, and to change norms on both genders together will bring about more comprehensive and sustainable changes.

Implications of COVID-19

The first cases of COVID-19 were officially reported on December 31, 2019, and by mid-May 2020, there have been nearly 5 million people worldwide infected with the virus, and more than 320,000 people have died. The socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic are serious and varied for women and men. ILO estimates that total or partial lockdown measures affects 2.7 billion workers, accounting for 81% of the worldwide workforce. The IMF projects a severe decline in the global economy. COVID-19 will cause the world economy to experience an unprecedented recession.² In Viet Nam, the most recent survey of the Development Board of Private Economic sector (Board IV) with over 1,200 businesses assessing the impact of COVID-19 showed that if COVID-19 lasted for 6 months, 74% of the business are likely to go bankrupt. Statistics from the Business Registration Administration (Ministry of Planning and Investment) show that in the first two months of the year, there were 16,151 enterprises with temporarily suspended business, up to 19.5% over the same period last year, and 2,807 enterprises completed the procedure for dissolution.³

Although our study on men and masculinities in Viet Nam was completed before COVID-19 occurred, its results had many implications regarding health, social, and economic impacts of the pandemic not only to men but also to women and to gender equality in general.

Implication on men's health: According to Lancet, there are not enough data to confirm whether women or men are more infected with the virus, but it is certain that men account for the majority of deaths since the outbreak of the epidemic. Scientists suggest that the adverse effects of COVID-19 seem to be associated with a number of underlying diseases such as hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and lung disease. These diseases are more common in men and are related to smoking and drinking - behaviours related to masculine norms.⁴

Our study points out that Vietnamese men, especially the young group, could be more prone to the risk of infection as many of them engage in harmful practices such as smoking and drinking alcohol and rarely go for health checks.

Also, the study shows that Vietnamese men have a strong sense of their role as pillar of the family and their responsibility to ensure a stable life for the family. The findings of the study

2 Kirzinger et al., (2 April 2020) KFF Health Tracking Poll - Early April 2020: The Impact Of Coronavirus On Life In America. Retrieved 27 April 2020 at <https://www.kff.org/health-reform/report/kff-health-tracking-poll-early-april-2020/>

3 <http://trungtamwto.vn/su-kien/15086-kinh-te-viet-nam-va-the-gioi-duoi-bong-ma-covid-19>, accessed 16/5/2020

4 [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)30823-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30823-0/fulltext)

revealed that many men are currently facing several mental health issues, and one of the most serious ones is caused by work/money pressure, which is related to their role as the family's pillar, especially among the young age group and men with higher educational attainment. The outbreak of COVID-19 may exacerbate this issue. For those who lose their jobs and live paycheck by paycheck, the crisis really puts a huge burden on them, which in turn negatively affects their mental health. In turn, mental health issues and psychological stress due to being unable to fulfil their role of pillar can cause men to engage in negative practices such as drinking, using drugs and risky behaviours, or increasing violence against spouses or partners.

In regards to the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic: Although both men and women are affected by the pandemic, the way it affects women and men varies widely. The most recent studies on the gender effects of COVID-19 show that this pandemic increases gender inequality and exacerbates the gender-based violence that existed before the outbreak. Measures to respond to pandemics such as lockdown at home, home schooling of children, working online ... can double or triple the burden of women's unpaid work and increase the risk of violence from husbands or intimate partners. There are, however, some studies showing positive signs of a more equitable redistribution of labour, as men and boys are more likely to help with housework since the outbreak of COVID-19. In a quick assessment by UNWOMEN in three Asian countries, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Pakistan, in April 2020, more than half of the women surveyed said their husbands helped more with housework, while 33 to 85% (depending on the country) said that their sons help more with housework than before.⁶

Our study on Vietnamese men has indicated COVID-19 could have an impact on family relationships of men in many different ways. The traditional gender labour division - "men are responsible for outside matters and women are responsible for inside", is still quite common in Vietnamese society. Stories of women's double or triple burden during the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic have been reported in the mass media and widely shared in social media. The increase of domestic violence is reflected in the increase of calls to helplines and the number of cases when women had to seek shelter in the Peace House. However, the COVID-19 crisis may redefine the roles of men and women in the family. There are various stories of men sharing household chores and helping with childcare reported in the media. Some men shared that when they stayed at home for a long time, they witnessed the hard work of their wives/mothers and that made them more sympathetic to women. Some men actively participated in sharing the work burden and appreciated being at home with their wives and children.⁷ One point to note here is that the pandemic has differentiated the impact on different groups of men. Our qualitative analysis has shown that younger men are more open to housework than older men, while older men still believe that housework is for women and men must be the breadwinner in

5 <https://www.nytimes-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/www.nytimes.com/2020/05/06/upshot/pandemic-chores-homeschooling-gender.amp.html> accessed 17/5/2020

6 <https://data.unwomen.org/resources/surveys-show-covid-19-has-gendered-effects-asia-and-pacific>, accessed 15/5/2020

7 <http://laodongthudo.vn/lam-viec-online-hieu-qua-thoi-dich-benh-105396.html>, Accessed 17/5/2020

the family. Staying at home challenges this perception of men, so they may be more resistant to change than those who already have an open mind. There are also cases in which the man in the family loses his job and has to stay at home while the woman still works and earns money. Prior to the pandemic, both of them worked, and the woman was mainly in charge of the housework. But now, when only the woman works, the housework should be transitioned from the woman to the man.

In terms of intimate relationships with wives/partners, our study has pointed out that the controlling behaviour and domestic violence conducted by Vietnamese men still exist with noticeable percentages. Staying at home due to COVID-19 could aggravate this situation. Seeing and interacting with each other every day can increase the likelihood of conflict and dispute, which would in turn lead to verbal and physical violence between the wife and husband. Moreover, the increasing financial pressure caused by unemployment or a decrease in income can potentially trigger more conflicts and violence in the family.

Regarding family decision making, this study has figured out that a high percentage of Vietnamese men have a final say in the family's major expenditures while women play a decisive role in daily expenses. COVID-19 can challenge this norm in the sense that both wife and husband will need to make decisions together more so that the family can survive the crisis. Losing jobs or having less income, men will lose their perceived role as "family's pillar" or "breadwinner of the family". As a result, their decision-making power in the family will be weakened. Moreover, the pandemic really attacks many families' financial positions, and thus, both wife and husband need to discuss with each other carefully every issue and make every decision together so that the whole family can overcome depression.

The results of this study show that the proportion of men owning valuable household assets is many times higher than that of women. As we know, the COVID-19 epidemic has a detrimental economic impact on the nation when many businesses face the risk of shut-down and many people lose part of or all their income. Farmers also cannot sell their products, and some have to destroy the stock by themselves. Therefore, many men can lose their property ownership, especially production/business facilities, to pay for their debt or living. This in its turn could cause worries and tensions, triggering conflicts and violence in the family.

To summarize, it is noteworthy that, the impact of emergency health events like COVID-19 is gendered as it impacts men and women differently. The obvious and serious consequences that COVID-19 has on men in terms of health point out that many human health problems and diseases are not solely related to biology but can also be conditioned by human behaviours, and therefore, they are not gender neutral. Gender norms and practices can expose men and women to various health problems and disease. This means that interventions for improving health and eliminating diseases should not be limited to medical interventions but also include social solutions. In the case of COVID-19, along with vaccines and medical treatment, an effective and sustainable measure lies in removing the masculine norms that lead to harmful practices such as smoking and drinking and promoting the norms that encourage healthy practices

such as physical exercise, good hygiene, regular health checks, and compliance with preventive measures.

The different socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on men and women requires different approaches and measures to respond to the pandemic and mitigate its consequences to each gender. This in turn requires understanding and taking into account the gender norms and practices which can exaggerate the negative impact of the pandemic or help to mitigate it. In-depth studies on the association of gender norms and impact of COVID-19 can help to formulate more practical solutions for addressing the consequences of the pandemic and provide recommendations for proactive measures to similar crises in the future.





1

Introduction

1.1. Contemporary Viet Nam

1.1.1. A country of rapid development and globalisation

The study of “Men and Masculinity in a Globalising Vietnam” was conducted in 2019. The men participating in this study are living in a country with a highest rate of economic growth

in the world during the last 30 years.⁸ Today, young people under 30 have never had to queue to buy food with stamps. Even for people over the age of 50, those years are far away memories. Most Vietnamese now, especially the residents of the big cities, are used to the diversity and influx of consumer goods in countless shopping malls. Even in the countryside, almost no one has to wear a patch while garment products imitating famous international brands with quite affordable prices are excessively sold at the market. Vietnamese people are also get used to miraculous outspreading of new roads, the bustle of airports with busy domestic and international flights full of Vietnamese people traveling to do business between regions or countries in different continents.

From a country most isolated from the world, Vietnam has become one of the major powers in terms of Internet and smartphone users. In 2019, there are 64 million Vietnamese users of the Internet, accounting for 66% of the total population; 143 million mobile phone subscribers; 66 million people have active social media accounts, of which 58 million people or 60% of the population use social media via smartphones.⁹

The picture of daily life brings a sense of abundance that is the result of the Doi Moi policy promulgated during the Vietnam Communist Party Congress in December 1986. After 30 years, Vietnam, from a poorest country of the world, has become a middle-income country.¹⁰ Less than a decade, from 2002 to 2008, there were 45 million people lifted out of poverty. The poverty rate plummeted from over 70% to below 6% (USD3.2 / day) and per capita income (GDP per capita) increased 2.5 times, reaching 2,500 USD in 2018 with a growth rate of 7.1%. The fast-growing middle class currently accounts for 13% of the population and will double to 26% by 2026.¹¹

Some of the most noticeable changes in the Vietnamese economy since Doi Moi have been the increased international market integration, market liberalization and job creation in the private sector and an increasingly professionalized competitive workforce. Regarding bilateral cooperation, up to date, Vietnam has established diplomatic relations with more than 170 countries around the world, expanding trade relations, exporting goods to more than 230 markets of countries and territories, signed over 90 bilateral trade agreements, and many bilateral cultural cooperation agreements with countries and international organizations.¹² On 13 February 2020, the EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) was approved by the European Parliament and a year earlier, at the end of 2018, Vietnam joined the signing of the Comprehensive and Progressive Partnership Agreement. transpacific ministry (CPTTP).¹³

8 Nguyễn Quán, "Economic Growth Target 2006-2010 with Eight Explanations for the Highest Period of Economic Growth (1991-1995) in the 20 Years of Doi Moi (Renovation)," Tổng cục thống kê (General Statistics Office), n.d., <http://www.gso.gov.vn/default.aspx?tabid=382&idmid=2&itemid=4699>.

9 Vnetwork.vn, "Vietnam Internet Statistics 2019," n.d., <https://vnetwork.vn/news/cac-so-lieu-thong-ke-internet-viet-nam-2019>.

10 Adam Fforde, "Vietnam in 2011: Questions of Domestic Sovereignty," *Asian Survey* 52, no. 1 (February 2012): 176–85, <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2012.52.1.176>.

11 World Bank, "Overview of Viet Nam," 2018, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/vietnam/overview>.

12 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, "Achievement in the Process of Economic Integration of Viet Nam," <http://www.mofahcm.gov.vn/vi/mofa/nr091019080134/ns120222162217/>, n.d.

13 Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), "Free Trade Agreements of Viet Nam by February 2020," 2020, <http://www.trungtamwto.vn/chuyen-de/12065-tong-hop-cac-fta-cua-viet-nam-tinh-den-thang-112018>.

In parallel with economic and trade agreements, over the past three decades, Viet Nam has been actively seeking agreements to send Vietnamese workers to work abroad. Currently, about 540,000 Vietnamese workers are working abroad. In 2018 alone, 142,860 Vietnamese people were sent through official channels to work abroad. The migrant workers force contributes significantly to the total amount of remittances that Vietnamese migrants send annually. In 2018, the total amount of remittances received from migrant workers was US\$15,934 billion, an increase of nearly 12 times compared to US\$1.34 billion in 2018, contributing nearly 6.5% of Vietnam's GDP.¹⁴ Foreign currencies have changed the outlook of the rural areas where many people work abroad. The village no longer looks poor, but it is now prosperous with multi-story brick houses and spacious concrete roads.¹⁵ Motorcycles are no longer an asset but have become a popular means of transportation. Some families even have cars. Smart phones are no longer considered a luxury item, but become a popular means of communication for most people. The information and images about such wealthy villages thank to remittances from abroad that flooded in the national media,¹⁶ might contribute to the increased the flow of out-migrating workers year after year.

Along with the process of economic integration, recent decades have also witnessed Vietnam's rapid cultural integration with the outside world.¹⁷ The cultural influences of some Northeast Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea and the West through movies, music, fashion, the Internet, goods, and the opportunity to go abroad to work, travel and study have led to change in thinking and lifestyle of young men and women, especially urban youth.¹⁸ It is worth noting the changes in family relationships, as the atmosphere becomes more democratic and children have more freedom in their choice of career and future spouse.¹⁹

1.1.2. A young population and a society that values marriage, family and son.

According to the 2019 Viet Nam Population and Housing Census,²⁰ the population of Vietnam is 96,208,984 people, of which the male population is 47,88,061 people (accounting for 49.8%)

14 World Bank, "Personal Remittances, Received (Current US\$) - Vietnam," 2018, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.CD.DT?locations=VN>.

15 Hoàng Minh, "Visit the Village Full of Villas in the Countryside of Nghe An," *Báo Mới*, 2017, <https://baomoi.com/ghe-tham-lang-day-ray-biet-thu-giua-vung-que-nghe-an/c/22372659.epi>.

16 Phạm Tâm - Quốc Huy, "Commune with 1,000 Billionaires: Superlative in Nghe An, Thousands of Villas, Countless Cars," *Vietnamnet*, 2018, <https://vietnamnet.vn/vn/kinh-doanh/thi-truong/xa-1-000-ty-phu-bac-nhat-xu-nghe-biet-thu-hang-ngan-o-to-nhieu-vo-ke-486352.html>.

17 Ha Dang, "What Is Doi Moi? From Where Did It Start?," in *Việt Nam, Twenty Years of Renewal*, Vietnamese Title in Colophon: *Việt Nam Sau 20 Năm Đổi Mới* (Hà Nội: Thế Giới Publishers, 2007), 1–24, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007271919>; John Knodel et al., "Gender Roles in the Family: Change and Stability in Vietnam," *Asian Population Studies* 1, no. 1 (March 1, 2005): 69–92, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441730500125888>.

18 Gammeltoft, "The Irony of Sexual Agency: Premarital Sex in Urban Northern Vietnam," in *Gender, Household, State: Doi Moi in Viet Nam* (Cornell University Press, 2002), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctv1nhpf7>; Khuất Thu Hồng, Lê Bạch Dương, and Nguyễn Ngọc Hương, *Tình dục trong xã hội Việt Nam đương đại: chuyện dễ đùa khó nói* (Hà Nội: Tri thức and VNN Publishing, 2009).

19 Khuat Thu Hong, Bạch Dương Lê, and Nguyen Ngoc Huong, *Sexuality in Contemporary Vietnam: Easy to Joke about but Hard to Talk About*, 2nd ed. (Hanoi: Labourer Publisher, 2009); Nguyen Huu Minh, *Impact of Family Setting on Vietnamese Youth and Adolescents Health* (Ministry of health, United nations in Vietnam, and SIDA publication, 2006).

20 General Statistics Office, "Announcing the Results of the Vietnam Census and Housing Survey 2019," 2019, <http://tongdieutradanso.vn/cong-bo-ket-qua-tong-dieu-tra-dan-so-2019.html>.

and the female population is 48,327,923 people (accounting for 50.2%). Vietnam is the 15th most populous country in the world, and the 3rd in Southeast Asia (after Indonesia and the Philippines). Urban population accounts for 34.4%, increased 4.8 percentage points compared to 2009. Since 2006, total fertility rate (TFR) in Vietnam has fluctuated around replacement level in 2019, the estimated TFR is 2.09. On average, each household has 3.6 people, less than 0.2 people compared to 2009.

The vast majority of Vietnamese (86.3%) do not follow any religion. The remaining people, 13.2 million, accounting for 13.7% of the total population are followers of 16 religions of which Catholics and Buddhists are largest religions accounting for 44.6% and 35% of all religious followers respectively and together are accounting for 10.9% of the total population.

According to the 2019 Population and Housing Census, 77.5% of the population aged 15 and over has been married, of which 69.2% are currently married. The number of people divorced or separated is very low, only 2.1%. The proportion of ever-married males aged 15 and over is lower than that of females, 73.4% and 81.5%, respectively. In 2019, the average age of first marriage is 25.2 years, up 0.7 years compared to 2009. The average marriage age for men is 27.2, for women is 23.1. Urban men are married later than rural men (28.1 years versus 26.7 years). Urban women also significantly married later than rural women (24.8 years old compared to 22.1 years old).

The long existing tradition of son preference, the declining fertility and the widely availability of prenatal sex selection technology in recent years are the key factors leading to the increase in the sex ratio at birth. Throughout a decade, from 2009 to the present, the sex ratio at birth has increased from 110.5 boys per 100 girls to 113.8 in 2013 and 114.8 in 2018. The sex ratio at birth in 2019 is 111.5. The Government of Vietnam wishes to reduce the sex ratio at birth to below 109 by 2030. However, it is a fairly challenging target. There is a projection that the sex ratio of the adult population in next decades will be seriously imbalanced with the excess male population and the shortage of women of the same age group. Marriage and family structure will be deeply affected by this phenomenon. There will be a significant number of men who cannot find a partner and are forced to live alone in the society where marriage and family are always central values.

1.1.3. Rising inequality and social issues

The economic growth in Vietnam in the past three decades has been impressive, however, the fruit of development is not distributed equally in society, so it strongly activates the potentials of social inequality of pre- Doi moi period. Social stratification is getting more obvious. The gap between the rich and the poor has increased sharply as well as the gap between urban and rural areas, between ethnic and majority groups and between economic regions. According to Vietnam 2016 Living Standards Survey,²² the income gap between the highest income quintile

21 The sex ratio at birth is determined by the number of boys out of every 100 girls born in a year. The natural sex ratio at birth ranges from 102-105 boys per 100 girls.

22 General Statistics Office, "Result of the Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey 2016," n.d., <https://www.gso.gov.vn/default.aspx?tabid=512&idmid=5&ItemID=18976>.

and the lowest income quintile, or between the richest and poorest groups keeps increasing. In 2006, the highest income group had an average income of 8.36 times the lowest income group (1.5417 million VND / month compared to 184.3 thousand VND / month); By 2016, this gap has increased to 9.79 times (VND 7,547 million / month compared to VND 770.6 thousand). According to Oxfam's 2017 report, while 5.4% of the urban population lives below the poverty line, this figure in rural areas it is 22.1%.²³

Economic growth and integration have profound gender effects. On the one hand it offers many opportunities of employment, income and social mobility for women and men. On the other hand, it can reinforce existing gender inequality and create other dimensions of gender inequality. Over the past three decades, in parallel with economic development, Vietnam has constantly improved its legal framework to promote gender equality²⁴ but gender inequality persists in most aspects of life. While accounting for nearly half of the national workforce,²⁵ but because of lack of skills and little training, women are more concentrated in the informal sector and labour-intensive and low-paid jobs. Among waged workers, the average monthly income of female workers is only 87.2% of the average income of male workers.²⁶ Even in female predominantly sectors, such as health care, social work and sales, women are still paid less than men.²⁷

The notion that women's "heavenly duty" is to be a wife and to be a mother is one of the primary causes leading to the attachment of the role of caring for the family to women. As caregivers, women often lose opportunities in education, careers, and social and political activities. As caregivers, women tend to give up leadership roles and accept caring and supportive roles for their husbands, children, and family members on both sides. This caring and supporting role includes prioritizing the satisfaction of her husband's sexual needs and sacrificing her own satisfaction. The structure of the various social institutions in Vietnam, which involve gender, family, education, labour, and legal systems, has in fact limited Vietnamese women development through placing on their shoulder the burden of housework. Vietnamese society in general still wants family labour to be provided free of charge by women, sometimes at the expense of women's health, happiness and development.²⁸

23 OXFAM Việt Nam, *Dịch chuyển xã hội và bình đẳng cơ hội tại Việt Nam: Xu hướng và các yếu tố tác động (Social mobility and equality of opportunity in Viet Nam: Trends and Factors)* (Hồng Đức Publishing House, 2018), <https://thuvienso.quochoi.vn/handle/11742/47641>; World Bank, "Bước Tiến Mới Giảm Nghèo và Thịnh Vượng Chung ở Việt Nam (Climbing the Ladder: Poverty Reduction and Shared Prosperity in Vietnam)," 2018, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/206981522843253122/Climbing-the-ladder-poverty-reduction-and-shared-prosperity-in-Vietnam>.

24 Khuat Thu Hong, "Women and Development in Vietnam: Caught between Social Tradition and Economic Globalisation," *Regions and Cohesion* 6, no. 2 (June 1, 2016): 110–19, <https://doi.org/10.3167/reco.2016.060207>.

25 General Statistics Office, "Labour Market Update Vol.23 (Q3 2019)," 2019, <http://ilssa.org.vn/vi/ban-tin-khoa-hoc/ban-tin-cap-nhat-thi-truong-so-23-labour-market-update-vol23-97>.

26 General Statistics Office.

27 General Statistics Office, *Điều Tra về Lao Động Việc Làm 2014 (Report on Labour Force Survey 2014)* (Hanoi: Statistics Publishing House, 2015), <http://www.gso.gov.vn/default.aspx?tabid=512&idmid=&ItemID=15113>.

28 ISDS (2015) *Social determinants of gender inequality in Viet Nam: Research Results from 2012 to 2015*. Ha Noi: Hong Duc Publisher

In today's Vietnamese society, women also face pressures that have never existed before. In popular culture, from movies to articles and social media discussions, women are expected to have good looks, be smart, dress well, otherwise there would face a threat that their husband may look for another woman. Women are also expected to be wise mothers who know how to raise children into healthy, beautiful and intelligent children. They are encouraged to accompany men in the process of industrialization and modernization along with the strong development of technology while maintaining modesty and gentleness according to the norms and standards of "true Vietnamese woman".²⁹

Stress, disturbance, anxieties that are supposed to characterize the rapidly changing social conditions in Vietnam are certainly not just women's problems. Men could also be affected in different aspects and to different degrees. There is evidence of gender gaps where men are the one who lag behind in some areas. For example, statistics on education show that girls are outstripping boys in general education. The enrolment rate for boys and girls is basically the same from preschool to junior high school and increases at the same pace. In 2010, net enrolment rates for upper secondary education were about 34 percent for both genders, but by 2016, the percentage of female students increased to 43.5 percent, while the enrolment rate of male students were only 9.6 percent. Moreover, in high school, female students perform better than their male counterparts.³⁰

The reversal of the role with women working away from home to earn money, men staying home to play caring role is becoming more and more popular in some areas³¹ as women increasingly migrate to work abroad.³² Nowadays, the stories of men substitute their wives to look after their children and care for family has no longer been reported in the media as an anomaly as they were in the early 2000s.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution with the strong application of science and technology will reduce the hard jobs that have long been believed only suitable for men while also reducing the burden of household work thanks to automatic and digital technology. This means that women will have more opportunity to join the workforce and able to compete with men even in jobs that were previously exclusively owned by men. In Vietnam, this process may take place more slowly, however, there have been signs of a shift in employment structure. The share of women participating in agriculture is gradually decreasing.³³ Also, while the overall unemployment rate

29 Khuat Thu Hong, "Women and Development in Vietnam: Caught between Social Tradition and Economic Globalisation," *Regions and Cohesion* 6, no. 2 (June 1, 2016): 110–19, <https://doi.org/1>

30 World Bank, "Bước Tiến Mới Giảm Nghèo và Thịnh Vượng Chung ở Việt Nam (Climbing the Ladder : Poverty Reduction and Shared Prosperity in Vietnam)."

31 Phạm Nga, "The Commune with More than 400 Single Dad," *VnExpress*, 2020, <https://vnexpress.net/doi-song/xa-co-hon-400-ga-trong-nuoi-con-4051201.html>.

32 Hiệp hội Xuất khẩu lao động Việt Nam (Vietnam Association of Manpower Supply VAMAS), "Report on the Situation of Sending Vietnamese Workers to Work Abroad under Contracts in the Period of 2010-2017," n.d.

33 Tổng cục thống kê / General Statistics Office, *Thông tin thống kê giới tại Việt Nam 2018 (Gender statistics in Vietnam 2018)* (Hanoi: NXB Thống Kê (Statistical Publishing House), 2019).

among women is still higher than that of men, the gender gap in the unemployment rate in 2018 compared to 2010 has been narrowed with the unemployment rate among men aged 20-39 increased while this proportion among women of the same age tended to decrease.³⁴

Certainly, the problems faced by Vietnamese women and men will continue to grow. Therefore, understanding women, men and gender relations, gender dynamics as those impacted by economic development, industrialization and globalisation and at the same time as the agents of those processes are very critical. Taking advantage of the opportunities that development brings to men and women, addressing the problems that occur with each gender and promoting gender equality requires comprehensive social policies based on scientific evidence. If the study of women has somewhat met that requirement, the study of men still has many gaps that need to be filled.

1.2. The need of studying men and masculinities in a globalising Viet Nam

Indeed, our knowledge of men and what men think about women, their relationships with women and gender equality is much limited compared to what we know about women and what they think about men, about gender equality. This is because in Vietnam, research on men has not received much attention. As men are always at the top of the gender hierarchy, studying men occasionally faces hesitation. When we shared the idea of studying men and masculinities, there were concerns that study of men would draw attention and resources that should have been devoted to women and people of other genders – who are still in subordination. On the other hand, this can be seen as supporting the inherent privileged position of men. Yet, it is true that men and boys, on average, have more privileges and benefits than women and girls; however, evidence shows that, in many cases, it is possible that the costs of masculinity exceed its benefits and privileges.³⁵

Fortunately, in many countries and at the global level, in the last two decades, the study of men and masculinities has received good attention of many sciences including sociology, anthropologies, political sciences, humanities, biological sciences, as well as in other disciplines. The rapid growth of this branch of research reflects an increased awareness of its importance both from a scientific and social significance perspective.

It is feminist scholars, who initiated and emphasized the priority of studying women, increasingly recognized that studying men and masculinities is important.³⁶ In his review of

34 Tổng cục cục thống kê / General Statistics Office.

35 Ravi Verma and Sapna Kedia, "We Need to Talk about Men," *India Development Review*, 2018, <https://idronline.org/need-talk-men/>.

36 Leslie Salzinger, "Revealing the Unmarked: Finding Masculinity in a Global Factory," *Ethnography* 5, no. 1 (2004): 5–27; Christine Stan-sell, *The Feminist Promise: 1792 to the Present*, Reprint edition (New York; Enfield: Modern Library, 2011).

men and masculinities research theories, Tal Peretz³⁷ emphasized the necessity of gender-aware studies of men and masculinities not only for academic interest and “balance”, but also for strengthening feminist scholarship and contributing to social change projects. Peretz outlined five reasons why studies of men and masculinities is worthwhile and important. Firstly, men are considered to be superior (compared to women and other genders) so the superordinate categories like men and masculinities tend to go unmarked, so it is necessary to correct this oversight by making men and masculine objects of study. Second, gender is a relational social structure embedded in an intersectional matrix of domination, and thus understanding one side of the structure tells us about the other. Peretz emphasized that “even a feminism that is totally and completely about women’s experiences should investigate “how men gain, maintain, and use power to subordinate women.” Third, the study of the social construction of masculinity helps to prove that masculinity and superiority of men are not due to nature, the hierarchical social structure and dominance (of one gender over others) is also not created by nature, and this structure is possible to change. Fourth, recent research shows that social barriers to social change efforts towards gender equality is due to masculinity rather than femininity. Finally, study of masculinity provides valuable information for feminist projects, reveals and demystifying power mechanisms, identifies their internal conflicts and constraints to inform change. Therefore, the studies of men, their interests and their access to power are effective and necessary ways to study where social change can be encouraged.

Indeed, the disadvantage of women and the privilege of men for a long time attract attention exclusively on women. Messerschmidt³⁸ emphasized that when we think about gender from the perspective of power relations, we need to study more powerful gender. The privileged position of men has led to the irony that men are largely ignored as a research object while men encompassing boys are having more and more problems not just in relation to women but also in life, work and among men themselves. A series of studies on masculinities have pointed to the problems that men today are facing. In a recent study “Understanding the Man of the 21st Century” by Shriver in the US, four out of nine men thought it was much harder to be a man today than previous generations.³⁹ On the other hand, the improved status that women have achieved is possibly seen as a threat to men and imposes challenges on their concept of masculinity. Many global studies including the Shriver’s report suggests that the primary reason attributing to men’s pressure lies within the rise of women’s economic position.⁴⁰

Yet, although gender inequality lead to restrictions on the rights of women and girls, it also has a significant negative impact on men and boys. International Labour Organisation,⁴¹ for example,

37 Tal Peretz, “Why Study Men and Masculinities? A Theorized Research Review,” *Graduate Journal of Social Science* 12, no. 3 (November 2016): 30–34.

38 Messerschmidt, James W, *Nine Lives: Adolescent Masculinities, the Body, and Violence* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000).

39 Hart Research, “Shriver Report: An Insight into the 21st Century Man,” 2015, <https://hartresearch.com/shriver-report-an-insight-into-the-21st-century-man/>.

40 Hart Research.

41 ILO, “Men and Masculinities: Promoting Gender Equality in the World of Work,” Working paper, December 10, 2013, http://www.ilo.org/gender/Informationresources/WCMS_232755/lang--en/index.htm.

pointed out to work related men's vulnerabilities and pressure such as physical and psychosocial risks in dangerous industries like mining or diving and long working hours to fulfil the role of breadwinner. Recognising indispensable role of men and boys in achieving gender equality in the work place, ILO has strongly adopted "men and masculinities" approach focusing on how to address the male side of gender equality including the ways gender roles and stereotypes affect men and boys' identities, behaviours and expected roles and responsibilities.

In Vietnam, men are similarly put under growing pressure in their life and are increasingly prone to various health problems that related to harmful practices such as drinking, smoking and using drugs. Vietnamese men are found to achieve significantly less progress in terms of diseases, injuries and risk factors compared to their female counterparts. According to the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study 2010 with coverage of 50 countries around the world, while there is an obvious decline in all-cause mortality rate at every age range, males aged 30-34 years old in Vietnam saw the smallest decrease. Recent Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALY) a measure of the burden expressed as the number of years lost due to ill-health, disability or early death find that much of this disease burden is due to health problems associated with gender socialization of boys and men around tobacco smoke and alcohol consumption, road traffic injuries and violence.

Yet, among three risk factors that account for the most disease burden in Vietnam, tobacco smoking holds top place.⁴² Every year in Vietnam, approximately 40,000 people died from tobacco-related diseases, such as stroke and coronary artery diseases, among others. Thirty percent of all heart disease deaths are caused by cigarette smoking In Viet Nam, almost one in two adult males (45.3%) are currently smoking tobacco.⁴³ Alcoholism is another rising issue among men, causing traffic accidents, violence and serious health problems. Study of HealthBridge in Vietnam shows that each year the country consumes about 3 billion liters of beer and 200 million liters of alcohol with men being the primary consumers. It is noteworthy that up to 70% of Vietnamese men drink alcohol and/or beer and one among four of them use alcohol at harmful levels. Men also account for the majority among reported 224,000 drug users⁴⁴ and 70% among 215,000 people living with HIV in the country.⁴⁵

Traffic accidents are the leading cause of death outside illness. Nationally, the rate of men died from traffic accidents is 5.9%, which is 3.3 times higher than the rate of 1.8% among women.⁴⁶ According to the statistics of the National Traffic Safety Committee in 2019, nationwide, every day there is an average of 48 traffic accidents, cause 21 deaths and 69 injuries. Report of

42 Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, "Global Burden of Disease Profile: Vietnam," 2010.

43 WHO (2018) Smoking causes 40,000 death in Viet Nam each year. <https://www.who.int/vietnam/news/detail/27-05-2018-smoking-causes-40-000-deaths-in-viet-nam-each-year>.

44 Lê Sơn, "Số Người Nghiện Ma Túy Cao Hơn Nhiều Con Số 224.000 Người (The Number of Drug Addicts Is Much Higher than 224,000)," VGP News, 2018, <http://baochinhphu.vn/Phap-luat/So-nguoi-nghien-ma-tuy-cao-hon-nhieu-con-so-224000-nguoi/350811.vgp>.

45 "Gặp Mặt Phóng Viên Báo Chí Nhân Tháng Hành Động Quốc Gia Phòng, Chống HIV / AIDS Năm 2019 (Meeting with Journalists on the Occasion of the National Action Month for HIV / AIDS Prevention and Control in 2019)," Department of HIV / AIDS Prevention and Control - Ministry of Health, 2019, <http://vaac.gov.vn/Tin-Tuc/Detail/GAP>

46 General Statistics Office, Result of The Vietnam Population and Housing Census 2019) (NXB Thống Kê, 2019).

the NTSC in 1st quarter of 2018, of 2800 traffic accidents, 85% were caused by men. Research shows that men are more likely to engage in risky behaviours when they are in traffic than women, including texting, calling, going in the wrong lane, speeding, not wearing helmets and using substances.⁴⁷ A national study on road traffic shows an alarmingly high rate of road accidents caused by Vietnamese men (at 81%) even though roads are equally populated between men and women.⁴⁸

Violence against women persist both in domestic and public spheres. Nearly 60% married women experienced at least one type of either physical, psychological or sexual violence perpetrated by their husband.⁴⁹ Sexual harassment in the public places or in the public transportation is increasingly reported. Among 2000 surveyed women and girls in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City, 87% reported experience of being sexually harassed in public.⁵⁰ A survey by ILO revealed that about 17% of female middle-level employees reported that they or some people they know have received a “sexual proposal from a superior” in return of work benefits.⁵¹

Violence among men is on the rise in at least the last decade. A dozen of deaths and over 6,200 hospitalizations from physical violence were reported during the 2015 Lunar New Year holiday.⁵² In the following years, the absolute number of men fighting during festivals may rise and fall, but it seems that the level of violence does not diminish, or even tends to increase.

In the family, men are dominant in making decision and control over land and other valuable assets. Men rarely share housework even though women are also engaged in income-generating labour like men. Out of the 14 care tasks in the family, women undertake 12 ranging from cooking to caring for senior or sick family members. Men primarily undertake one or two tasks, including the maintenance and fixing of household appliances, and representing the family in contacting local authorities. Out of 12 child care tasks, most men undertake one or two tasks either taking their children out for playing or attending school meeting. Men don't want to take responsibility in family planning resulting in more than two thirds of currently married couples practicing female family planning methods.⁵³ Yet, hesitance to share decision making power, domestic caring tasks and responsibility in family planning increasingly place men in an uneasy relation with their intimate partners and affect women's advancement.

47 Trần Duy, “Vi Sao Hơn 80% Tai Nạn Giao Thông Do Nam Giới? (Why More than 80% of Traffic Accidents Are Caused by Men?),” An Toàn Giao Thông, 2018, <https://www.atgt.vn/vi-sao-hon-80-tai-nan-giao-thong-do-nam-gioi-d250217.html>.

48 Trình Thụy Anh, Nguyen Xuan Dao, and Trình Tu Anh, “The Cost of Road Traffic Accident in Vietnam,” *Proceedings of the Eastern Asia Society for Transportation Studies* 5 (2005): 1923–33.

49 General Statistics Office (2010) National Study on Domestic Violence against Women in Viet Nam; ISDS (2015) Social determinants of gender inequality in Viet Nam: Research Results from 2012 to 2015. Ha Noi: Hong Duc publisher.

50 ActionAid (2015) Safe Cities for Women and Girls: Where Dreams Come True.

51 Institute For Family and Gender Studies, “Quấy Rối Tinh Dục Đối Với Nữ Lao Động Nữ ở Nơi Làm Việc: Sexual Harassment against Female Workers at Work: Legal and Practical Aspects),” June 2019.

52 Hai Suong, “15 Die, 6,200 Hospitalized for Injuries after Fights over Tet Holiday,” Vietnamnet, 2015, <https://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/society/124200/15-die-6-200-hospitalized-for-injuries-after-fights-over-tet-holiday.html>.

53 ISDS (2015). Social Determinants of Gender Inequality in Viet Nam. Ha Noi: Hong Duc publisher

This situation raises many questions that need to be answered: why do men engage in the harmful practice such as driving recklessly, using drugs, abusing alcohol and behaving in ways that can adversely affect themselves and their communities? Are men born violent or dominant? Is that men's nature?

The immediate answer is no. Men were not born violent or dominant. Like women, men are shaped by gender values and stereotypes from which the notions of masculinity are formed.⁵⁴ The problem is while we know quite a lot about how women are shaped by the notions of femininity and femininity-related gender values and stereotypes, less is known about this process for men. Deconstructing masculinity and its shaping regimes are an essential step towards answering these questions. We cannot continue doing gender research that focusing on women in isolation and promoting gender equality but working solely with women. Furthermore, men and boys are the other equal part of gender structure including men, women and other genders. To move forward to a gender-equal society requires profound changes among men and boys to think and act in new ways so that positive masculinities are cherished and exercised. There is evidence that understanding and considering masculinity (men's attitudes, aspirations, and concerns) is important in designing social policies and programs and effective tools to achieve gender equality.

This study is expected to provide valuable scientific inputs to fill in the gap of knowledge on men and masculinities, how masculinities are constructed in the contemporary Vietnamese society, what is men's attitudes toward women and gender equality. By delineating these aforementioned issues, we can better understand how and why men internalize certain norms and negotiate conflicting expectations of them within the dynamics of rapid economic and social changes in Viet Nam. The results of the study will identify the masculine characteristics that hinder the advancement of men and the characteristics that help men overcome challenges in the rapidly changing society of Vietnam. The study will analyse the pressure men experience and its origins and point out risk factors as the well as protective factors associated with risk-taking behaviours in men. This knowledge is essential for the development and implementation of comprehensive, evidence-based policy interventions that can improve the well-being of men, fostering positive attitudes and behaviours. The findings will inform the programs and policies to engage men in promoting women's advancement and gender equality in both domestic and public spheres.

1.3. Studies on Men and Masculinities

Gender-related issues in psychosocial, sociological, or public health studies have long received appropriate attention in efforts to deal with social issues. The proliferation of men and masculinities studies in recent years in various scientific fields reflects a growing interest in society for men and boys as well as the behaviours and attitudes of these groups. In the last 20 years, there have been many studies on the specificity, origin, structure and diversity of different

54 Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner, eds., *Men's Lives*, Tenth edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

types of masculinity. This topic has not only become a major and interesting field of study, but also contributes to explaining important aspects of men's life, especially the pressures they face.

1.3.1. Global contexts

Scholarship on men and masculinity started to emerge and proliferate in Western countries since 1970s and there is now a vast literature on the subject. Sociological and psychological perspectives were brought together in several earliest attempts to theorize masculinity.⁵⁵ Andrew Tolson's *The Limits of Masculinity* was among the first works studying masculinity. Tolson's book reflected a growing concern about the lack of discussion and research about men at a time when feminism was generating strong intellectual interest.⁵⁶ His book was followed by Hearn and Morgan's attempt in *Men, Masculinities and Social Theory* which engaged with but rejected both classical Marxist and feminist analyses.⁵⁷ These earliest works were then followed by a collection of essays that collectively claimed for the importance of the new approach. Notably, in Bly's *Iron John*, Keen's *Fire in the Belly: On Being a Man*, their so-called 'pro-feminist' approaches to the study of masculinity distinguished them from a rival body of work emerging largely as a reaction to feminism and as an advocate of men's rights in the last two decades of the 20th centuries.⁵⁸

Addressing the theoretical problems of gender from early 1980s, in *Masculinities* which was originally published in 1995, R.W Connell took a holistic position placing the unequal relationship between women and men at the centre of the analysis. Connell began to develop theories which contributed to replacing sex-role theory allowing for a much more dynamic understanding of masculinity and highlighting the crucial role of its historical development.⁵⁹ Along with its enormous impact on the field of gender studies, it has also been taken up across a wide range of other disciplines. A crucial part of applications of Connell's theory is that it provides a critical feminist analysis of historically specific masculinities whilst at the same time recognizing the different degrees to which individual men take part in its reproduction.⁶⁰

Being part of a scholar group, Connell and colleagues continued to produce *New Sociology of Men* approach that rejected the usual understandings of men from essentialist or biological perspectives.⁶¹ Cornwall and Lindisfarne concurred in *Dislocating Masculinities: Comparing*

55 Michael Kaufman, *Beyond Patriarchy: Essays by Men on Pleasure, Power, and Change* (Oxford University Press New York, 1987); Michael S. Kimmel, *Changing Men: New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinity*. (Sage Publications, Inc, 1987); Michael S. Kimmel and Harry Brod, "The Making of Masculinities: The New Men's Studies," 1987.

56 Andrew Tolson, *The Limits of Masculinity: Male Identity and the Liberated Woman* (Harper & Row, 1977).

57 Jeff Hearn and David Hopcraft John Morgan, *Men, Masculinities and Social Theory* (RLE Social Theory) (Routledge, 2014).

58 Robert Bly, *Iron John: A Book About Men*, Reprint edition (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2004); Sam Keen, *Fire in the Belly: On Being a Man* (New York: Bantam, 1992); Warren Farrell, *The Myth of Male Power: Why Men Are the Disposable Sex* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993).

59 R. W. Connell and Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities* (University of California Press, 1995).

60 Nikki Wedgwood, "Connell's Theory of Masculinity—Its Origins and Influences on the Study of Gender," *Journal of Gender Studies* 18, no. 4 (2009): 329–339.

61 Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell, and John Lee, "Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity," *Theory and Society* 14 (January 9, 1985): 551–604, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00160017>.

Ethnographies that gender identities are socially constructed. Whereas, the authors focused on the constant contestation of this process by recognizing dominant forms of masculinity as a frame for unequal relations, they suggested that the control of one type of masculinity is ‘never totally comprehensive.’⁶²

Most masculinity research continues to focus on developed societies. The late 1980s and 1990s saw rising media interest and public debate about boys and men in Japan, Germany, the United States, Mexico and Brazil which focused on social problems, for instance, unemployment, educational failure, domestic violence, and family breakdown. Scholarship at that time also discussed men’s changing identities. In Australia, the strongest focus has been on problems of boys’ education. In Japan, there has been a specific challenge to the salary-man model of middle-class masculinity while in Scandinavia, there has been more focus on gender equity policies and men’s responses to women’s changing position.⁶³

Since the turn of Millennium have, the debates have spread to Asia, in Middle East, Africa and America. A strong wave of studies and intervention on masculinities and gender norms took place in numerous countries of these continents.

Among literature in Asian societies, Louie wrote *Theorising Chinese Masculinity: Society and Gender in China* (2002) which can be considered a pioneering effort to provide a comprehensive study of this subject. In addition to describing in detail the historical development of the male image from pre-modern to contemporary times, Louie also focused on the ways in which Chinese men have been represented under the Western gaze and how these representations have negotiated with the dominant Western culture. Most recently, in 2015 in *Chinese Masculinities in a Globalising World* Louie paid attention to examine the way Chinese masculinity is constructed as it travels to and from China and around the world in order to see how the cultural interaction between China and Western world has shaped masculinity transformations.

Connell’s 2003 paper inspired a lot of work on men and masculinities across the world. The most notable is the research *Understanding of masculinity* conducted within IMAGES Project (International Men and Gender Equality Survey) in many countries. For example, the IMAGES in Middle East and African countries covered the most basic aspects of men’s life in these regions. Regarding the relationship between men and women, the research results show that a high percentage of men in this region have prejudices about the role of women and their participation in economic activities. In other respects, the study also points to inequality and prejudices related to the role of each gender. In the family, men are the ones who always have the decisive voice and tend to have high control. In the relationship with children, men show little interest in the care and nurturing of their children and leave that role entirely to the woman.

62 Nancy Lindsfarne and Andrea Cornwall, *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies* (London; New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 1994).

63 Michael S. Kimmel, Jeff Hearn, and Robert W. Connell, eds., *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities* (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2005).

Since then, the study also shows a high rate of violence against women in the society of Middle East and North Africa. In terms of health, men seem to have better mental and physical health than women, although a significant proportion of men show negative signs of health due to pressure from work, family and negative habits such as smoking, alcohol and drug use.⁶⁴

The MAGES that was conducted in eight low- and middle-income countries including Brazil, Chile, Mexico, India, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda explores men's attitudes about gender and gender equality, the determinants of equitable attitudes, and investigate the relationship between equitable attitudes and behaviours in relationships. The results show that men report a positive but ambivalent attitude towards gender equality, and that education, income and more equitable practices in the family during childhood are associated with more attitudes and practices in adult men. In most countries, men's equitable attitudes are also linked to equitable practices, including greater participation in housework and reduced violence and a higher sexual satisfaction. The findings suggest the need for attitudes-changing approaches, as well as policy and structural approaches that create lived experience of gender equality for men. Based on the connection between childhood experiences and adult men's attitudes and practices, the findings also emphasize the need for programs and policies to promote equitable participation of both sexes in the care giving.⁶⁵

Promundo have done an interesting study called "The Man Box" to explore what does mean being a young man in the US, UK and Mexico. The Man Box refers to the set of beliefs, communicated by parents, families, the media, peers, and other members of society that place on men. The authors sought to test the concept of the Man Box, measuring how young men encounter these messages socially, how they internalize them personally, and how these beliefs shape both their lives and the lives of those around them. Men "in the Man Box" are those who most internalize and agree with society's rigid norms about how men should behave. Young men "outside the Man Box" are those who have broken out of the box, who embrace more positive, equitable ideas and attitudes about what "real men" should believe and how they should behave. The authors conclude that the Man Box is alive and has immediate, sometimes contradictory, and often harmful effects on young men and on those around them.⁶⁶

Another important initiative of Promundo within MenCare campaign is *The State of the World's Father* report (SOWF). SOWF reports provides analysis of fatherhood and caregiving, draws upon research and statistics from hundreds of studies covering all countries in the world with available data. The report provides recommendations for policy and programmatic action. It targets governments, employers, and individuals around the world to promote involved

64 El Feki, S., Heilman, B., and Barker, G., eds., *Understanding Masculinities: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) – Middle East and North Africa* (UN Women and Promundo-US, 2017), <https://promundoglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/IMAGES-MENA-Multi-Country-Report-EN-16May2017-web.pdf>.

65 Ruti Galia Levto et al., "Pathways to Gender-Equitable Men: Findings from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey in Eight Countries," *Men and Masculinities* 17, no. 5 (2014): 467–501, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X14558234>.

66 Brian Heilman, Gary Barker, and Alexander Harrison, *The Man Box: A Study on Being a Young Man in the US, UK, and Mexico* (Promundo, 2017), <https://promundoglobal.org/resources/man-box-study-young-man-us-uk-mexico/>.

fatherhood and caregiving. Launched first in 2015 and released every two years, the SOWF report provides a periodic, data-driven snapshot of the state of men's contributions to parenting and caregiving globally by addressing four issues related to fatherhood: unpaid care work in the home; sexual and reproductive health and rights, and maternal, new-born, and child health; men's caregiving and violence against children and women; and child development. Using global data on men's involvement in caregiving and maternal and child health, and on the connections between fatherhood and violence, the report provides the basis for concentrated social, political, and healthcare initiatives; broad institutional change; and public awareness to bring about a transformation toward equitable, involved fatherhood. It defines a global agenda for involving men and boys as part of the solution to achieve gender equality and positive outcomes in the lives of women, children, and men themselves.⁶⁷ The third *State of the World's Fathers* report released in 2019, reveals new research on men's caregiving from 11 countries, with additional cross-country analysis of data from over 30 countries. It calls for men's uptake of their full share of the world's childcare and domestic work – across all societies and relationships – to advance gender equality.⁶⁸

The 2018 review done by Marcus, Stavropoulou and Archer-Gupta within the Gender and Adolescent Global Evidence (GAGE) Program brings together evidence from 36 studies of 34 programmes working with adolescent boys and young men to promote more gender-equitable masculinities. The 34 programmes span 24 low and middle income countries across world regions, with two-thirds of them in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. All the programmes involved direct, face-to-face work with adolescent boys and young men, aiming to change attitudes, norms and behaviour from the 'bottom up'. While a few involved some media activities alongside face-to-face informal education and discussion, the focus was very much on personal transformation as a route to social change. The programmes examined generally did not aspire to change policy or practice, and few worked with community leaders or influencers on a sustained basis. Overall, these programmes contributed to a wide range of positive impacts on different areas of gender equality. On almost all indicators, a clear majority of programmes found that participants adopted more gender-equitable attitudes or behaviour.⁶⁹

Most recent work of Sapna Kedia and Ravi Verma provides a thorough review of key research and intervention programs and initiatives on gender norm and masculinities undertaken within last 20 years.⁷⁰ The paper provides a comprehensive analysis of key concepts related to gender norm and masculinities and factors that influence norms around masculinities, documents the initiatives for changes in masculinities and related norms and discusses the “what” and “how”

67 “State of the World's Fathers,” n.d., <https://stateoftheworldsfathers.org/>.

68 N. van der Gaag et al., “State of the World's Fathers: Unlocking the Power of Men's Care,” Washington, DC: Promundo-US, 2019.

69 R. Marcus, M. Stavropoulou, and N. Archer-Gupta, “Programming with Adolescent Boys to Promote Gender Equitable Masculinities: A Rigorous Review,” Unpublished Manuscript, 2019, <https://www.gage.odi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Masculinities-Review-WEB1.pdf>.

70 Kedia, S. and Verma, R, “Gender Norms and Masculinities: A Topic Guide” (ALIGN: London, 2019), alignplatform.org/masculinities-guide.

to engage men across key areas including violence against women and girls, health, unpaid care work, women's economic empowerment, education. Lessons learned from programmes and case studies are also presented.

In short, after Connell's 2003 paper, there has been a lot of work and emerging insights about good practice related to various aspects of men and masculinities was conducted and published. UN agencies such as UNFPA, UNWOMEN, ILO are among most active. The work keeps evolving and increasingly improved with strong technical assistance from prominent international organisations like Promundo, International Research Center on Women (ICRW), and their partners including alliances, network, program and projects across the countries. These studies, provide not only an overall picture of men and masculinities across the world but also a deep understanding of men's attitudes, behaviour and practices that informed policies and interventions of different scales in many countries.

1.3.2. Local context: Studies on men and masculinities in Viet Nam

In Vietnam, most of what we currently understand about men and masculinities is fragmented and diffuse. Gender studies and gender-equality programs in Vietnam mostly focus on women - the subordinated gender, but largely neglect their dominant counterparts. Large-scale surveys, including nationally representative studies as well as social and health interventions primarily target women. There are a few available literatures on masculinity undertaken in Vietnam.

It was not until mid-2000s when the first literature on masculinity was found in Vietnam. Among the minor body of literature is the work by Rydstrom. With findings from her anthropological fieldwork in a northern Vietnamese commune, the author analysed men's use of physical punishment when interacting with their sons or grandsons in *Masculinity and Punishment: Men's Upbringing of Boys in Rural Vietnam*. Her work examined how violence is informed by, while also reinforcing a masculine discourse, as well as the ways certain codes regarding men's beating of boys are constructed by the contradictions between ideals of nonviolent behaviour and punishment.⁷¹

In 2008-2009, ISDS conducted a study Men sexuality among 228 men aged 15 to 67 in four sites of Vietnam, namely Hanoi, Ha Tay, Ho Chi Minh City and Can Tho, including both rural and urban sites. This study aimed to draw a profile of sexuality and sexual behaviours of Vietnamese men, understand their sexual health issues, identify constructions of male sexuality and sexual behaviours, as well as propose recommendations for improving their sexual health. The study indicated that men are expected to be more skillful and experienced than women and to take leading role in sexual relationships. All research participants shared that they believed men's sexual skills are in correlation with their masculinity. Having sexual affairs, hence, is seen by many to be an indicator of a healthy sexual desire and strong masculinity. Therefore, even

71 Helle Rydstrom, "Masculinity and Punishment: Men's Upbringing of Boys in Rural Vietnam," *Childhood* 13, no. 3 (2006): 329-348.

though out-of-marriage sexual affairs are not appreciated morally, they are however cherished by many men as they perceive them to be a sign of an admirable masculinity.

Harriet Phiney's study (2008) conducted in Hanoi on men's extramarital sexual relationships and women's risk of HIV infection in marriage showed the association between masculinities and HIV transmission risk. Perceiving men's infidelity as a sign for masculinities could lead to HIV infection in men and transmission to their loyal wife.⁷²

A more recent study *Heterosexual Masculinity in Contemporary Vietnam: Privileges, Pleasures, and Protests* accomplished by Horton and Rydstrom in 2011 drew on ethnographic data collected in two different settings in northern Vietnam. The work investigated the way heterosexual masculinity is constructed among Vietnamese younger men and suggested that the intersection between heterosexuality and masculinity characterizes a site of contestations between moral ideals, expectations about gendered support, and sexual pleasures disguised as protests.⁷³

Most recently, ISDS led a research *Study on Gender, Masculinity and Son Preference in Nepal and Vietnam* which deployed household survey on 1,424 men in Hung Yen and Can Tho. The study explored the dimensions, nature and determinants of men's varying attitudes to son preference and gender-based violence. The study showed that in both Nepal and Vietnam the majority of men had a moderately gender equitable attitude but favoured conservative gender roles for women. The gender equitable norms in both countries were indicated to be influenced by men's education, occupation and religion. With regards to perceptions on importance of sons and daughters, it was shown that the preferences were determined by gender roles and expectations.⁷⁴

In a study concerning Vietnamese men's sexual relationships outside marriage in 2016, Nguyen Ngoc Huong and colleagues specified that traditional Vietnamese culture, to an extent, tolerates men's extramarital sexual affairs if they are beneficial to the continuation of family's lineage. Findings found that infidelity do not correlate with the marriage's quality but is more affected by geographic, cultural and social settings. In other words, men engaging in extramarital sexual relationships not because they are disappointed at their own marriage but because their residential social and cultural context tolerates this behaviour.⁷⁵

Despite the recent emergence of men and masculinity scholarship, there remains little knowledge about this subject in Vietnam. The few existing studies on masculinity are either qualitative or

72 Harriet M. Phiney, "Rice Is Essential but Tiresome; You Should Get Some Noodles": Doi Moi and the Political Economy of Men's Extramarital Sexual Relations and Marital HIV Risk in Hanoi, Vietnam," *American Journal of Public Health* 98, no. 4 (2008): 650–660.

73 Paul Horton and Helle Rydstrom, "Heterosexual Masculinity in Contemporary Vietnam: Privileges, Pleasures, and Protests," *Men and Masculinities* 14, no. 5 (2011): 542–564.

74 Priya Nanda et al., *Study on Gender, Masculinity and Son Preference in Nepal and Vietnam* (New Delhi, India: International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), 2012).

75 Huong Nguyen, Cheng-Shi Shiu, and Melissa Hardesty, "Extramarital Sex among Vietnamese Married Men: Results of a Survey in Urban and Rural Areas of Northern and Southern Vietnam," *The Journal of Sex Research* 53, no. 9 (2016): 1065–1081.

small-scale quantitative study in which “the broader generalizability of the findings should be verified”.⁷⁶ The lack of large-scale data and analysis on this population leaves men a hard-to-reach and neglected group and hinders progress on ending inequality between women and men in Vietnam.

1.4. Theoretical Background

This section begins with a summary of major theoretical views about men and masculinities. Next is the theoretical framework of the study of men and masculinities in contemporary Vietnamese society.

1.4.1. A summary of major theoretical models on men and masculinities

The studies of men and masculinities was initiated in Western countries around the beginning of the 20th century and have been developing within three major theoretical models which based on biology, anthropology and sociology respectively. From the 1970s onward, feminist theory become most compelling framework for masculinity study and is adopted widely in both academic and development fields.

1.4.1.1. Biological models

Scholars follow the biological model based on differences in the reproductive system and physiological organisation of men and women to explain the differences in psychological temperaments and social behaviours between them. For example, some scholars suggest that endocrine functioning causes gender differences, because of the influence of testosterone, men tend to be aggressive, competitive and violent, while estrogene makes women passive, gentle and sensitive. Other authors see the differences in reproductive organs and their function as origins of the differences in their reproductive behaviours. Based on the fact that a man can produce 100 million sperm per ejaculation, a woman in her lifetime can produce less than 200 eggs capable of conception and production of healthy baby, these authors argue that because they have so many sperms, men are dictated by the biological “command” to impregnate as many women as possible; while women, because only a limited number of eggs can be conceived, tend to look for a healthy man, stick to him try to keep him along for the sake of their children. Some differences in the human brain are linked by some scholars, to the intellectual and emotional differences of women and men. Accordingly, it is proposed that men have the ability to think rationally and abstractly because their left hemisphere is more developed. And women are more emotional and capable for tedious works thanks to the dominance of the right hemisphere.⁷⁷

76 Kathryn M. Yount et al., “Men’s Perpetration of Intimate Partner Violence in Vietnam: Gendered Social Learning and the Challenges of Masculinity,” *Men and Masculinities* 19, no. 1 (April 1, 2016): 64–84, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X15572896>.

77 Robert Trivers, “Parental Investment and Sexual Selection,” in *Sexual Selection and the Descent of Man*, 1972, 378; Steven Goldberg, *The Inevitability of Patriarchy*, First Edition (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1973); Edward O. Wilson, *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1975); Steven Goldberg, “Reaffirming the Obvious,” *Society* 23, no. 6 (September 1, 1986): 4–7, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02697102>.

The biological differences between women and men are considered as biological imperatives, or as Vietnamese metaphor “heavenly destined”, so they are immutable and unchangeable. The concern is that these arguments are used to justify unequal gender division of labour within the home and in workplaces; as well as justify violence perpetrated by men, to tolerate their unfaithful behaviour and to limit women’s potentials and opportunities of advancement. This view is still quite popular in Viet Nam and is widely manifested in commercial advertisements, in school textbooks, in social policies, even, in lectures and statements of some prominent scholars. More dangerously, this view is also used to hinder or disrupt efforts to promote gender equality. Accordingly, men are perceived as the stronger sex who have to play a key economic role as breadwinner so they have the right to make important decisions in the family and society. Men are deemed rational so they would be better leaders. Women are perceived as the weaker and more emotional sex, so they are suitable for a caring role. Women who advanced in their careers are often suspected of being unable to fulfil their “natural mandate” as wives and mothers. It’s considered women fault if their husbands commit adultery or when their children are not doing well in the school.

Biological perspectives on masculinity and femininity have been challenged by many scholars in various respects. Sociologists raise the question, if these differences are “natural”, why are men and women forced to practice the rules they should have followed naturally? Biological differences between men and women can create some limits for social behaviour differences but cannot dictate the characteristics of women and men in any culture. Differences in the roles and characteristics as well as practices of women and men across different cultures have rejected biological explanation. Furthermore, as biological traits occur across a spectrum, the binary models of biological differences between men and women failed to explain the cases when some people are not born male or female, but intersex. This is strong evidence proving that, it is not person’s chromosome or endocrine gland determine his or her behaviour. We may be born male or female, or other sex, but we become men and women or other gender in a cultural context.

1.4.1.2. Anthropological model

Anthropologists, notably Margaret Mead, with her studies of three primitive societies asserted that culture is a determining factor of differences in gender roles. In her classic work *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935), Mead describes the significant differences in gender roles in different tribes and challenges the views of some early anthropologists⁷⁸ that the universality of gender division of labour stems from cultural adaptation to the environment. Mead suggest it would be a mistake to consider that any biological differences define universal gender roles for women and men.

1.4.1.3. Sociological model

Sociologists in the 1960-1970s introduced the “sex role” model. Sex role is a set of attitudes, attributes and behaviours that are thought to be appropriate for men and for women.

78 Robin Fox and Lionel Tiger, *The Imperial Animal*, Subsequent edition (New Brunswick, N.J., U.S.A: Transaction Publishers, 1997).

Accordingly, masculinity is associated with technical aptitude, aggression, competition and the abstract thinking. Femininity is associated with caring, affection, attachment and passivity. The theory of sex roles has become the basis for countless educational books and self-help materials for parents who want their children to grow up to be a strong boy or gentle, caring girl. This model has been criticized by feminist scholars that it leads to the dominance of men over women by asserting the dominance of masculinity over femininity⁷⁹ and that this lays the foundations for high levels of gender inequality.

In the early 1970s, women's studies programs began to develop a new gender research direction, not based on assumptions about men and women, and not assuming that one gender was more developed than the other. And in the mid-1970s, first works on men appeared being inspired by the feminist theory on gender.⁸⁰

The first generation of research on masculinity, while supportive of gender being socially constructed, criticized the sex role model and the assumption that masculinity is the norm by which both women and men are assessed. They point out that the sex role model ignores the ways in which the concept of masculinity and femininity were based on, and reproduced, the power relationship between the sexes. It is not only men as a group that imposes power on women as a group, but it is the concept of masculinity and femininity that creates that power relationship. The power mechanism is a key factor in both the concept and expression of gender. The researchers introduced a new model of "gender relations" and found that the definition of masculinity and femininity is relational, meaning that the definition of one gender depends in part on meaning about the other gender.

1.4.1.4. Feminist perspectives in studies on masculinity

Inspired by feminist critiques, in the 1980s, the wave of masculinity studies evolved one step further with the observations of the different experience of masculinity by different groups of men. Dimensions such as race, caste, age, sexual orientation, nationality, religion and ethnicity will shape their gender roles with different expectations. Scholars such as Harry Brod (1987), Michael Kimmels (1987) and R.W. Connell (1987) or Jeff Hearn (1987) from their observations of men groups that are often regarded as deviant such as black men, gay men and men of ethnic minorities have come to the conclusion that it is inappropriate to talk about masculinity as a single homogenous version. Instead, race, class, age, sexuality interact with gender to form different expressions of gender and gender practices. Different men groups construct different versions of masculinity. Connell argues that oppression of women by men is a key mechanism links different masculinities, and that marginalization of certain types of masculinity is an important component of the power generation process of men over women. Indeed, patriarchy oppresses not on women but also oppresses men who don't conform to the rigid roles and norms of masculinity.

79 Kimmel and Messner, *Men's Lives*.

80 Ibid.

1.4.2. Key theoretical points of the study on men and masculinities in Viet Nam

The theoretical framework is based on two pillars. The first pillar is social constructionist point of view. This approach suggests that for biological males, their identity as a man develops as they grow. Their sex is male but their identity as a man develops through a complex process of cultural interactions in which they learn gender scripts that match their culture and try to adjust those scripts to make them more acceptable. The second pillar is feminist standpoints according to which gender differences exist not only between genders but within each gender. Men are not only different from women and other genders, they are different from each other as their identity is constructed from the interaction of gender aspects and demographic, social, economic, cultural and political dimensions. So that the experience of masculinity is not uniform and not universal for all men in society. Different groups of men experience and practice different versions of masculinity and the differences between the versions can be huge depend on the socio-economic and political contexts where they live and on the different stages of their life.

1.4.2.1. Masculinity is a social construct

The social constructionist perspective argues that the meaning of masculinity is different in different historical periods and in different cultural contexts. It changes over time within every culture. Accordingly, while there are some similarities there are also many differences between Vietnamese men in the second decade of the 21st century and their Western or African counterparts, even Vietnamese men in the North have many differences compared to Vietnamese men in the South. And certainly, Vietnamese men nowadays are different from Vietnamese men in the early 20th century.

Thus, the perspective of social construction of gender is both historical and comparative, allowing us to explore the meaning of masculinity in different historical periods and different geographic regions of Viet Nam. This will be done when analysing groups of men of different generations and living in different regions in the study.

1.4.2.2. Masculinity is not homogenous

R. W. Connell is pioneer in building a feminist theoretical foundation of masculinity, according to which masculinity is socially constructed and there is not a universal masculinity but many masculinities. These masculinities are 'not fixed character types but configurations of practice generated in particular situations in a changing structure of relationships'⁸¹ Four categories of masculinity are identified in Connell's work, including (1) Hegemonic, (2) Subordinated, (3) Complicit, and (4) Marginalised.

The idea of *hegemonic masculinity* – a dominant form of masculinity in society has been considered as a major vehicle for a conceptual arrangement that allows for the explanation of masculinity's

81 R. W. Connell (1995) *Masculinities*. Australia: Allen & Unwin.

82 Robert Morrell, "Of Boys and Men: Masculinity and Gender in Southern African Studies," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24, no. 4 (December 1, 1998): 605–30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057079808708593>.

power aspects.⁸² The concept introduced by Connell in 1987 has considerably influenced recent thinking about men, gender and social hierarchy and served as an analytical instrument to identify those attitudes and practices among men that perpetuate gender inequality, involving both men's domination over women and the power of some men over other groups of men. The concept has been widely used and debated, and over the years refined with the basic idea that hegemonic masculinity is 'a culturally idealized form' and 'is both a personal and a collective project'.⁸³ The concept of hegemonic masculinity found prompt use and proved significant in education studies to understand the dynamics of classroom life, criminology, in studying media representation of men, researching social determinants of men's health, organization studies, as well as in discussion of other disciplines such as art, law, geography and politics.⁸⁴

Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994) argued that in any society, there are many masculinities, each with a characteristic shape and set of features. The contours of these masculinities change over time, being affected by external changes in society and at the same time the contours also affect the society. It is not the case that all masculinities are equally powerful as social forces.

According to Lorber (1994) men and masculinities are not formed by gender alone even though men and masculinities are the explicit focus and are understood as explicitly gendered. Men are not simply men or simply about gender, and the same applies to masculinities. Men and masculinities are shaped by differences of age, by class situation, by ethnicity and racialization, and so on. The gendering of men only intersects with other social divisions and social differences. It might be, indeed, argued that as studies of men and masculinities continue to deconstruct the gendering of men and masculinities and assumptions about them. Other social divisions, such as age, class, and disability, come more to the fore and are seen as more important.⁸⁵

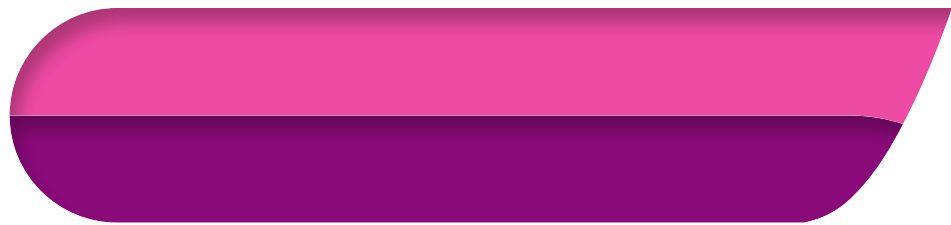
In the contemporary Vietnamese society, masculinity is also constructed in different ways by men's economic background, age, ethnicity, education, and so on. The matrix of masculinities is complicated because of factors interwoven. Research based on this point of view can reflect and explain the differences between different groups of men in social reality instead of treating them as a homogeneous group.

Furthermore, the meaning of masculinity is not constant throughout a man's life but will vary according to the different stages of his life as the problems the man faces when he wants to prove himself, to feel about success and to the social institutions that he practices his views on masculinity change with his life. Therefore, we take a life course approach to look at men's experiences at different stages of life. The questions will be designed to collect information about the meaning of masculinity and experience as a man in different stages of the life of the men participating in the study.

83 Rachel Jewkes et al., "Hegemonic Masculinity: Combining Theory and Practice in Gender Interventions," *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 17, no. sup2 (2015): 112–127.

84 Robert W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender & Society* 19, no. 6 (2005): 829–859.

85 Judith Lorber, *Paradoxes of Gender* (Yale University Press, 1995).



2

Research Methodology

2.1. Objectives

The ultimate goal of this project is to contribute to the development of the basic research field of men and masculinity in Vietnam and to support the development of policies and programs to improve the life quality of men, develop families and promote gender equality.

Specific objectives of this study are to:

- 1) Describe the profile of different male groups and describe socialisation of masculine norms in Vietnamese society.
- 2) Understand how masculinity affect gender awareness and gender practice in the fields of education, labour/employment, health care, social participation and family life.
- 3) Examine the connection between masculine norms and risk behaviours/violent behaviours of men.
- 4) Identify factors that fostering positive gender practices for men.
- 5) Develop recommendations on policies and interventions to improve men's quality of life, develop families and increase men's active participation in activities that promote gender equality.

2.2. Research Questions

The study of “Men and Masculinities in a globalising Vietnam” is carried out in a large-scale holistic approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods to answer the following specific research questions:

- 1) How of masculinity is constructed in Vietnam? In other words, what does it mean to be a man in the Vietnamese society?
- 2) What are men's perception and attitudes towards women and gender equality?
- 3) What are the masculine norms and social factors that determine men's harmful gendered practices?
- 4) What are the masculine norms and social factors that determine men's positive gendered practices?

2.3. Key concepts

The concepts and terminologies listed below are the concepts and terminologies drawn on feminist scholarship in the fields of gender and masculinities studies. We used these concepts and terminologies for designing this research, constructing data collection tools as well as developing our analytical framework We have reviewed a lot of documents to select concepts and terms, discussed them carefully among research team until reaching consensus. The borrowed concepts and terminologies are often coined by prominent feminist scholars or leading research institutions in the field of gender, men and masculinities, widely cited in official documents of international agencies like UN or developed within well-known intervention programs/ projects.

Key concepts

Masculinity is the particular pattern of social behaviours or practices that is associated with ideals about how men should behave and their position within gender relations. Masculinity is a relational concept, defined in opposition to femininity and expectations about how women should behave. One of the more common features of masculinity is the equation of manhood with dominance, toughness, and risk-taking. However, as with femininities, there are multiple masculinities, which change over time and between and within settings.⁸⁶ Some of these masculinities may hold more power and privilege than others: some may be considered exemplary; some may be socially marginalized.⁸⁷

Gender: refers to the socially constructed attributes and roles associated with being male or female. These attributes and roles define what is expected, allowed, and valued in women and men. Gender is neither invariable nor biologically determined—it changes over time and across settings. Individuals learn and internalize gender-related attributes and roles from families and friends, in schools, communities, religious and cultural institutions, and from the media. Because gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context, it is experienced and expressed differently across various social identities, including political status, class, ethnicity, physical and mental disability, age, and other social classifications.⁸⁸ Gender does not refer to the physical attributes in term of which men and women differ, but to socially formed traits of masculinity and femininity.⁸⁹

Geeta Rao Gupta stresses: “Gender is a culture-specific construct – there are significant differences in what women and men can or cannot do in one culture as compared to another. But what is fairly consistent across cultures is that there is always a distinct difference between women’s and men’s roles, access to productive resources, and decision-making authority. Typically, men are seen as being responsible for the productive activities outside the home while women are expected to be responsible for reproductive and productive activities within the home.”⁹⁰

Gender roles are learned behaviours in a given society, community or other social group. They inform which behaviours, roles and responsibilities are perceived as appropriate for men and for women respectively. It is important to recognize that both men’s and women’s actions are influenced, controlled or constrained by widely held beliefs and expectations about appropriate and inappropriate forms of behaviour.⁹¹

Gender has, five main elements: relational, hierarchical, historical, contextual and institutional. Gender relations refer to the relations between women and men. They often create hierarchies between and among groups of women and men that lead to unequal power relations disadvantaging one group over another. Most societies give men privileged access and control over rights, resources and opportunities and value masculine attributes, roles and behaviours more highly than those associated with women and femininity.

86 Robert W. Connell, “Understanding Men: Gender Sociology and the New International Research on Masculinities,” *Social Thought & Research* 24, no. 1/2 (2001): 13–31.

87 Connell. *Ibid.*

88 Adapted from UN Women, “Concepts and Definitions,” UN Women - Gender Mainstreaming, n.d., <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm>.

89 Anthony Giddens, *Sociology*, 6 edition (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009).

90 G. R. Gupta, “Gender, Sexuality, and HIV/AIDS: The What, the Why, and the How,” *Canadian HIV/AIDS Policy & Law Review* 5, no. 4 (2000): 86–93.

91 ILO, “Men and Masculinities.”

Gender equality is defined as the same treatment of all people regardless of gender identity; simply pursuing equality fails to recognize the ways that gender identity informs needs, aspirations, priorities, and sensibilities. **Gender equity** refers to the creation of conditions of fairness that take into consideration the diversity of all people across all genders and identities—not despite their gender, but in response to their gender. As such, gender equity is necessary to achieve gender equality.

Social norm: A pattern of behaviour motivated by a desire to conform to the shared social expectations of an important reference group.⁹² Norms have been called ‘the vital determinants’ of social hierarchy as they reflect, reproduce and normalise relations of power.

Gender norms dictate what is masculine, what is feminine and how men and women should behave in their daily lives, promoting those behaviours as natural and thus legitimate ways of being and doing in a given context. Much feminist analysis views gender norms as a means by which gender-inequitable ideologies, relationships and social institutions are maintained.

Keleher, H. and Franklin, L. (2008) argue: “Gender norms are powerful, pervasive values and attitudes, about gender-based social roles and behaviours that are deeply embedded in social structures. Gender norms manifest at various levels, including within households and families, communities, neighbourhoods, and wider society. They ensure the maintenance of social order, punishing or sanctioning deviance from those norms, interacting to produce outcomes which are frequently inequitable, and dynamics that are often risky for women and girls [...] Norms are perpetuated by social traditions that govern and constrain behaviours of both women and men, and by social institutions that produce laws and codes of conduct that maintain gender inequities.”⁹³

Patriarchy: Literally, patriarchy means rule by the male head of a social unit (a family or tribe, for example). The patriarch, typically a societal elder, has legitimate power over others in the social unit, including other (especially, younger) men, all women and children. However, since the early twentieth century, feminist writers have used the concept to refer to the social system of masculine domination over women. Patriarchy has been a fundamentally important concept in gender studies, leading to the development of a number of theories that aim to identify the bases of women’s subordination to men.⁹⁴

Attitude: An individual’s psychological tendency to evaluate something (a person, symbol, belief, object) with some degree of favour or disfavour.⁹⁵

Behaviour: What a person actually does.⁹⁶

Power includes the ability to make decisions about one’s life and the capacity to influence and/or effect desired goals. All relationships are affected by the exercise of power, which in turn is profoundly shaped by social identities, including gender, race, class, sexual orientation, age, religion, nationality, etc. Gender inequalities are defined by “power over,” or controlling forms of power, whereas efforts to

92 Heise, L., “Social Norms: Introduction.”

93 H. Keleher and L. Franklin, “Changing Gendered Norms about Women and Girls at the Level of Household and Community: A Review of the Evidence,” *Global Public Health* 3 Suppl 1 (2008): 42–57, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441690801892307>.

94 Jane Pilcher and Imelda Whelehan, *Fifty Key Concepts in Gender Studies* (London, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446278901>.

95 Rachel Marcus and Caroline Harper, “Gender Justice and Social Norms—Processes of Change for Adolescent Girls,” London: Overseas Development Institute, 2014, <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8831.pdf>.

96 Marcus and Harper.

increase women's empowerment and promote gender equality seek to promote alternative forms of power: power to, power with, and power from within, which focus on using individual and collective strengths to work towards common goals without coercion or domination.⁹⁷

Globalisation: we borrow this term from Anthony Giddens who refers to globalisation as growing interdependence between different people, regions and countries in the world as social and economic relationships come to stretch worldwide.⁹⁸

2.4. Research Design and Tool Development

This research is the first large-scale survey in Vietnam on men and masculinities and research team has not much experience with this topic. Therefore, we developed the research design according to the following steps:

2.4.1. Review research methods on men and masculinities

Before the 2000s, most of the research on men in Viet Nam were qualitative studies or quantitative survey with small scale. Within the last decade, there have been numerous surveys on men and masculinities conducted around the world. Among most important research studies on this topic is the International Studies on Men and Gender Equality (IMAGES). This is a comprehensive, multinational study on men's lives, attitudes and practices related to gender norms, gender equality policies, family relations, fatherhood, violence in private relationships, sexual diversity, health and economic pressure. IMAGES was developed by Promundo and the Center for International Women's Studies (ICRW) in 2008. By 2017, IMAGES has been implemented in more than 30 countries. Research partners in Asia inspired by IMAGES have been supported by the UNDP, UNFPA and other donors. IMAGES involves both women and men and the participants were usually 18 to 59 years old and is implemented in many countries across regions.⁹⁹

Besides, we also reviewed other the studies on men and masculinity in the relation of son preference in India;¹⁰⁰ or studies on masculinity and barrier factors such as race effect to help seeking behaviour on health of African men;¹⁰¹ the study on men's participation in gender equality practice in 27 member countries of the European Union.¹⁰²

97 "Gender Equality Glossary," The UN Women Training Centre, n.d., <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/print.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=E&sortkey=&sortorder=&offset=0>.

98 Giddens, *Sociology*.

99 Levtoev et al., "Pathways to Gender-Equitable Men.;" Keedi, A., Yaghi, Z., and Barker, G., "We Can Never Go Back to How Things Were Before: A Qualitative Study on War, Masculinities, and Gender Relations with Lebanese and Syrian Refugee Men and Women" (Beirut, Lebanon: ABAAD and Washington, D.C.; Promundo, May 2017).

100 Priya Nanda et al., "Masculinity, Intimate Partner Violence and Son Preference in India" (New Delhi: International Center for Research on Women, 2014), <https://www.icrw.org/publications/masculinity-intimate-partner-violence-and-son-preference-in-india/>.

101 Wisdom Powell et al., "Masculinity and Race-Related Factors as Barriers to Health Help-Seeking Among African American Men," *Behavioral Medicine* 42, no. 3 (July 2, 2016): 150–63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08964289.2016.1165174>.

102 Sandy Ruxton and Nikki van der Gaag, "Men's Involvement in Gender Equality – European Perspectives," *Gender & Development* 21, no. 1 (March 2013): 161–75, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2013.767522>.

These studies inspired us to undertake a large-scale research study to explore various aspects of life of Vietnamese men. We borrowed a lot from those survey and studies in term of concepts, methodology and data collection tools.

2.4.2. Developing a question bank and a master questionnaire

We gathered the questionnaires of all the reviewed studies into a question bank on men and masculinity. Over the next three months, the research team worked, again and again, to select the most appropriate questions with the context of Vietnam. A master questionnaire, including about 500 questions, was developed according to the initial research hypothesis.

The master questionnaire was further adapted after two consultation workshops with researchers and experts in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city. In this stage, the questionnaire was shortened; all questions were organized into different themes to reflect different aspects of men's life and issues related to masculinity.

2.4.3. Survey piloting and testing questionnaire

Piloting survey and testing the questionnaire were conducted for two rounds in Ha Noi city and a rural commune. Each time 12 men of different ages and occupations were recruited and interviewed. Each interviewee then asked to provide their comments on the questions which they were not sure if they correctly understood. After each round, the research team review the questions thoroughly for their validity and revised each question as well as the questionnaire structure. In the second round, all the questions worked well. Respondents of the piloting survey understood adequately and consistently the questions and gave appropriate answers. The questionnaire structure was also revised to improve smooth connection between the themes.

2.4.4. Developing a digital questionnaire

The completed questionnaire was used to create a digital instrument in Kobo Toolbox software which could be used on tablets for data collection. In this stage, the questionnaire was revised and refined to improve its logic and clarity.

Finally, the questionnaire includes 107 questions with 330 sub-questions through 11 topics:

- Part A: General information
- Part B: Life before the age of 18
- Part C: Education and employment
- Part D: Social participation
- Part E: Marriage and intimate relationship
- Part F: Son-reference and fatherhood experience
- Part G: Interests and time usage
- Part H: Physical and mental health and sexual life

- Part I: Perception and attitude about women and gender equality
- Part J: Perception of masculinity
- Part K: Knowledge about laws

2.4.5. Sampling

2.4.5.1. Sampling strategy

Based on the Vietnamese context, specific objectives, resources and implemental capacity, this study uses a multi-stage stratified sampling method:

Stage 1: Selected 04 provinces representing 04 zones. From 06 economic zones in Vietnam, the provinces were grouped into 04 zones including: Zone 1 as the Red River Delta, Zone 2 is the Northern Midlands and Mountains and Central Highlands, Zone 3 is North Central Coast, and Zone 4 is Southeast and Mekong River Delta.

Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city were intentionally selected as they feature unique characteristics of the two biggest cities in Vietnam due to the great diversity of their residents (from both cities and countryside). Additionally, big cities are often hit first by new trends of changes, which means the pictures represented by cities are more holistic and dynamic. Random sampling method was applied in the cases of the other two zones, as a result, 04 provinces were selected to represent the different zones in this research namely: Hanoi for Zone 1, Hoa Binh for Zone 2, Khanh Hoa for Zone 3, and Ho Chi Minh city for Zone 4.

Stage 2: Research site selection. In the 04 selected provinces, the research sites were selected based on a list of rural and urban areas using probability proportionate to size - PPS. According to the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) that took place in 08 developing countries, positive perceptions for gender equality were recorded more in the younger male group with higher educational level and living in urban areas.¹⁰³ Because of this, our sample was selected equally between urban and rural areas instead of following the proportion of 30 – 70 as population division in the country with the aim to discover more positive changes in the perceptions, attitude, and behaviours of Vietnamese men towards masculinity and gender equality. A total of 80 sites were selected, including 40 urban and 40 rural sites.

Stage 3: Household and individual selection. In each research site, 33 households were selected from a list of households with male members in the age of 18-64. In each selected household, one man was randomly selected to participate in the research. Simple random sampling method was applied for the selection of households and male individuals for the research. The random numbers were created using EpiInfo.

103 Levto et al., "Pathways to Gender-Equitable Men."

2.4.5.2. Sample size

The sample size of the study is calculated based on the following formula:

$$n = \frac{Z^2(r)(1 - r)}{ME^2} \cdot \frac{(deff)(1.15)}{(p)(\bar{n})}$$

In which:

- n: Estimated required sample size in households.
- Z: Z=1.96 to achieve 95% confidence level.
- r: Estimated ratio for the leading indicator
- deff: Effect of sample design
- ME: Marginal Error. Error limits are allowed with 95% confidence. In fact, ME is usually determined by 12% of r (Relative Marginal Error of r)
- p: Percentage of the total population used to calculate indicator r (~ 32%)
- \bar{n} : Average size of households (average number of people per household ~ 3.85)

The survey aims to understand the life of Vietnamese men and the concepts of the ideal model of masculinity. However, there is currently no consistency in what the ideal man is and what the calculation method is, and thus no one has collected this index. In case the ratio of the leading indicator is not known, it is assumed that the ratio of the leading indicator $r = 0.5$. Theoretically, if we fix the limit of sampling error (Marginal Error), then the sample size reaches the maximum value when $r = 0.5$ or the ratio of r is 50%.

Applying multi-stage sampling and increasing the number of sampling stages increase the effect of sample design (deff). It is difficult to know exactly how much deff is without knowing the main criteria to design the sample. Experts put a hypothetical number of $deff = 5-6$.

Using this formula gave a minimum sample size of 2,400. With the nonresponding rate at 10%, the sample size for this research was calculated to be 2,640, divided by 80 research sites, which means 33 individuals in each research site.

2.4.6. Data collection

2.4.6.1. Quantitative survey

After completing the questionnaire as well as the sampling frame and sampling list, the research team contacted local authorities of each district in the study area for fieldwork planning. The focal point of each study site (could be commune leader or local volunteer) sent a letter and contacted each cluster/hamlet to invite the selected people to participate in the study. During this time, the research team also organized training workshops on Kobo software in Ha Noi for interviewers and supervisors who supposed to do fieldwork in Hanoi and Hoa Binh, and in Ho Chi Minh City for the team who do fieldwork in Ho Chi Minh City and Khanh Hoa.

Using tablets to collect data helps daily monitoring data collection, checking progress, checking data updates, irregularities of data, data synchronization and remote technical support. Thus, the supervisor and coordinator can be managed data collection process in the field, provide support and check for errors and the logic and validity of data.

The survey was conducted from the end of June 2019 to the beginning of August 2019. Each interview was taken about 60 minutes in the respondent's house or their suggested place to ensure privacy and comfort for them. The total number of collected questionnaires is 2,567, of which 574 from Ha Noi (22.36%), 608 from Hoa Binh (23.69%), 516 from Khanh Hoa (20.1%) and 869 from Ho Chi Minh City (33.85%).

2.4.6.2. Qualitative research

The qualitative research component was conducted and analysed parallelly with quantitative research. The aim of qualitative interviews was providing insights and specific information of different groups of men. In total, there were 40 in-depth interviews (IDIs) with men in various age groups and ten focus group discussions (FGDs), including five male groups, one mixed gender group and three female groups.

In-depth interviews and focus group discussions take place between ninety and one hundred and twenty minutes. Participants in in-depth interviews and group discussions include men and women of different ages, doing different jobs. The interviews focused on life experiences of Vietnamese men in various aspects such as family, work, health, men's perceptions of women and gender equality, as well as conceptions of masculinity of respondents and society in general. Focus group discussions focused on contemporary conceptions of men and masculinity, family and social expectations for men. All IDIs and FGDs were recorded with the consent of the participants.

2.4.7. Data management and analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative data are managed by the Data Management Unit (DMU) of ISDS after collecting. Then, quantitative data was merged, verified and cleaned into a completing database. Because of applying tablet with Kobo software, it has reduced the time for data entry and cleaning compared with the traditional method which uses paper questionnaires. The data set after cleaning was shared and used by the research team for analysis on STATA software version 14 (Stata Corporation). For qualitative interviews, the records were transcribed and analysed on NVivo version 10 software (QSR International). Research data, either quantitative or qualitative data, is managed and stored by DMU to ensure the safety and confidentiality of participants' personal information.

Research protocol and all instruments were approved by the ISDS Institutional Review Board (IRB) (IRB Approval letter No. ISDS-IRB/09/2019) in order to confirm that research protocol and tools do not lead to any potential risks for participants and for data collectors as well.

Before conducting data collection in the study areas, the local collaborators contacted selected individuals, explained the research purposes and invited them to participate in the study (survey or qualitative study). The collaborators made a list of those who agree to engage in the research and time they are available, then send to the research team.

Prior to interview, the data collector explained again about the purpose of the study and the participants' rights such as anonymity, confidentiality, can withdraw from the study anytime or can refuse answer any question. The participants were also provided with the phone number of the ISDS Director and informed that they could call if they had any questions.

Research participants were compensated for a small amount of money for the time they spent on the interview.

2.5. Limitations of the Data

The quantitative survey conducted random sampling by households from the list of all households with men aged 18-64 in the survey area, then selected 01 male aged 18-64 years old in that household. Being aware of intensive outmigration of men in some areas, research team have requested local collaborators check and contact the eligible respondents in advance and provide a list of people eligible for substitution. However, in many cases, the selected people for the survey were not present at home at the time of the survey due to various reasons, such as working far away from home, being busy at work and hangout with their friends (mostly in the young group). In some cases, despite being at home, the selected people refused or were unable to participate in the interviews. To overcome this situation, each numerator was provided ISDS introduction letters and accompanies by the head of the hamlets to visit each household. This helped reduce refusal rate significantly and to build trust from participants to research team. Those who were absent for three times were substituted with other people. The study also identified a non-response rate at 10% to guarantee the minimum sample numbers needed for the study.

Despite these remedial strategies, we were not able to reach enough men of youngest group. This serious limitation affects the age structure of the sample and thus limits the generalizability of the findings.

This study also faces another inherent limitation of social studies that are inadequate reporting and social desirability. For example, the respondents who did not know or remember information accurately could provide vague information or estimation. In particular, in regard of sensitive topics such as violence, sexuality, risk behaviour sand negative experiences, the respondents might be inclined to provide answers that, in their opinion, were consistent with the general moral viewpoint, or in line with official political and social views for fear of being judged. Therefore, the research team designed the tools to ensure consistency and questions for with crossed-check. In addition, all enumerators were recruited and trained carefully so that they always respect and do not judge the participants' answers. Other solutions were that the respondents were encouraged to choose interview location where they would feel comfortable.



3

Research Findings

3.1. Socio-Demographic Profile of Studied Men

3.1.1. Demographic characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the study sample have demonstrated in table 3.1.1. Based on the assumption that the in urban area the process of shifting gender norms is more dynamic with traditional norms are challenged earlier and stronger and the new norms are emerging earlier than in rural area. In order to capture these changes, we oversampled urban area to be almost a half of the total sample for this research, instead of reflecting the national urban-rural structure as of 30% and 70%.

The ages of the research sample range from 18 to 64, with the mean value being 42.5 (SD=12.9). The average age of the urban research sample is higher than that living in rural areas. Regarding age groups, the age group of over 60 accounts for the smallest portion at 10.09%, followed by the youngest age group between 18 – 29 at 19.36%. The other age groups namely 30-39, 40-49, and 50-59 take up relatively similar proportions at 23.10%, 22.79%, and 24.66%, respectively. In comparison to the results of 2019 Census in which the rate of the age groups namely 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59 and 60-64 in the Vietnamese population are respectively 29.50%, 26.60%, 21.16%, 16.85% and 5.90%,¹⁰⁴ this study sample has a smaller proportion of the age group of 18-29 and a significantly higher rate of the age group of over 50 years old. The main reason is due to the difficulty in approaching men in young age groups as many work or study far from home for a long period of time and are not counted in the sample selection. What's more, young men often participate in social activities more than those in older age groups which made it difficult to meet them during fieldwork. This means that men who were available at home during fieldwork were often in older age groups (this has been mentioned in the Limitations section).

The majority (over 85%) of the survey respondents are Kinh ethnic, the rest are Thai and Muong in Hoa Binh province (which account for about 12% of the sample size) and other ethnic groups in other provinces such as Khanh Hoa and Ho Chi Minh city. Similarly, non-religious respondents make up the most of the study sample at 84%, next are Buddhists, Catholics, and those following Caodaism. This finding is similar to the rate of the Kinh and non-religious population in Vietnam, at 85.3% and 86.3% respectively.¹⁰⁵

104 Tổng cục thống kê / General Statistics Office, Kết Quả Tổng Điều Tra Dân Số và Nhà ở 2019 (Result of The Vietnam Population and Housing Census 2019), 163.

105 Tổng cục thống kê / General Statistics Office, 54.

TABLE 3.1.1. **Demographic characteristics**

	Urban % or Mean (SD)	Rural % or Mean (SD)	Total % or Mean (SD)	p
Living area	49.40	50.60		
Mean age	43.3 (13.5)	41.7 (12.3)	42.5 (12.9)	<0.001
Age groups				<0.0001
18 - 29	20.19	18.55	19.36	
30 - 39	20.03	26.10	23.10	
40 - 49	20.03	25.45	22.79	
50 - 59	26.81	22.56	24.66	
60+	12.93	7.31	10.09	
Ethnicity				<0.0001
Kinh	88.17	82.06	85.08	
Muong	5.85	7.62	6.74	
Thai	2.92	7.54	5.26	
Others	3.06	2.78	2.92	
Religion				0.028
Non	83.12	84.83	83.99	
Buddhism	11.44	10.93	11.18	
Catholics	5.28	3.54	4.40	
Caodaiism	0.16	0.69	0.43	
N	1,268	1,299	2,567	

3.1.2. Education

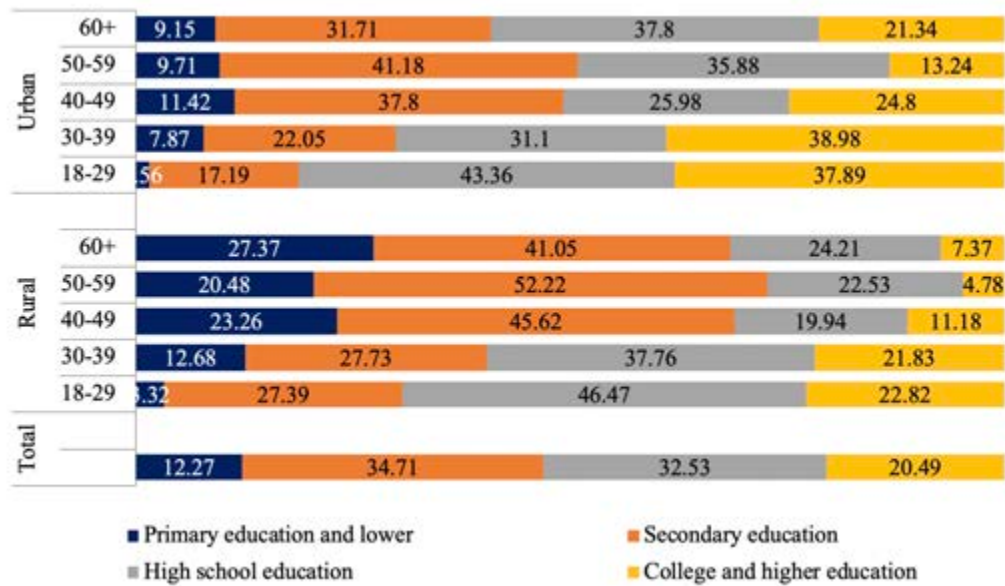
There are 12.27% of the surveyed men only finished primary school or even never went to school, those who finished secondary school and high school account for similar rates which take up to approximately one third of the remaining sample size, the rest 20% graduated from technical school, college, university or higher (figure 3.1.1). To compare, the corresponding proportions of 15+ year-old Vietnamese men who have attained abovementioned educational levels are respectively 27.8%, 33.3%, 18.6%, and 20.3%.¹⁰⁶ It can be seen that there is a difference regarding the highest educational attainment of the respondents and the general 15+ year-old Vietnamese men, as the proportion of those who finished primary school or lower among the research sample is not even as half, whereas those who finished secondary school is almost double that of the compared group.

Figure 3.1.1 also illustrates the differences in education between age groups and between living areas. In specific, the younger age groups tend to have higher educational level in both urban and rural areas. The rate of those who finished technical schools, colleges/ universities in the

106 Tổng cục thống kê / General Statistics Office, Kết Quả Tổng Điều Tra Dân Số và Nhà ở 2019 (Result of The Vietnam Population and Housing Census 2019), 124.

age group under 40 in urban areas is over 38% whereas this figure in rural areas stands at 22%. Educational levels of the research sample reflect, to an extent, the effort of Vietnam in the recent decades in improving education coverage for equality. In addition, in the nowadays context of knowledge economy, education has been better invested since it is the safest way leading to higher position and better income in the society.¹⁰⁷

FIGURE 3.1.1. Educational level of the research sample (%), N=2,567



3.1.3. Employment and Income

At the time of the research, the employment with income rate of the research sample was quite high at 83.39%, 13.32% used to work but were not working at the research time due to retirement, unemployment, or sickness. Those who never worked to generate income accounted for 3.39%, 3/4 among which are under 30 years old.

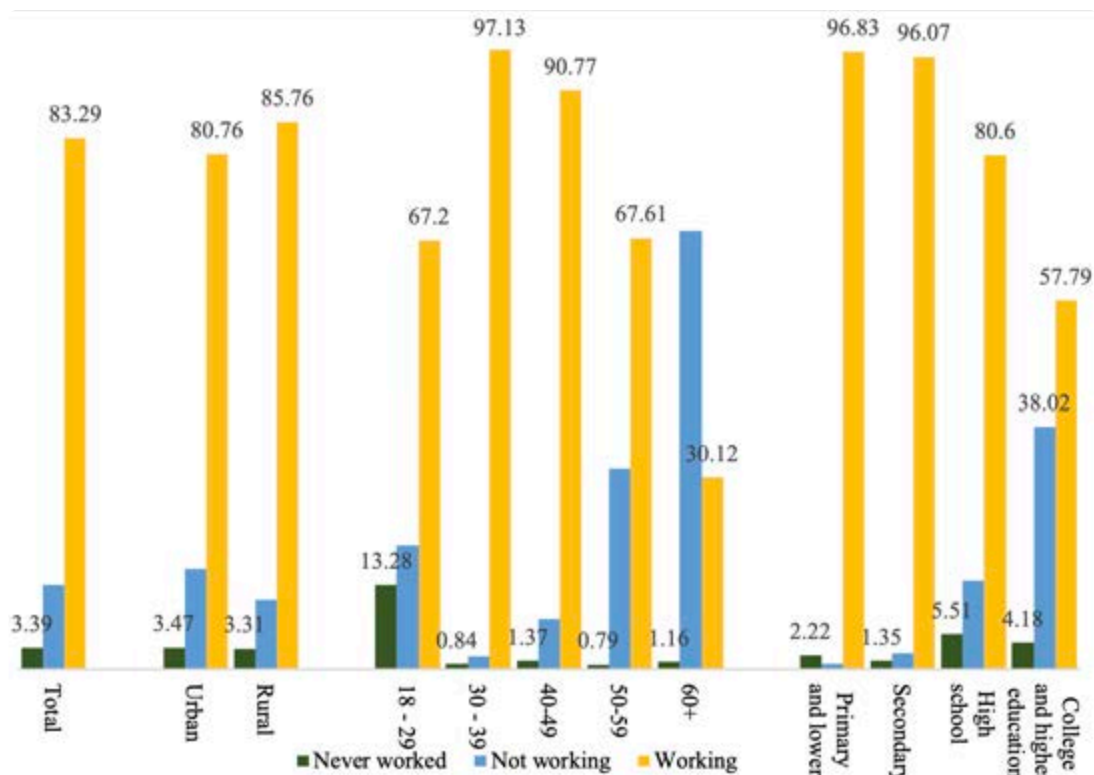
Analysis between different living areas demonstrates that the employment rates in rural and urban areas are not too different. Employment rate changes between different age groups and educational levels.

Regarding different educational levels, the higher the educational level, the lower the employment rate, especially the employment rate of those who have graduated from technical schools, colleges/ universities and higher takes up only 58%, and 38% of those were not working. This

107 World Bank, “Việt Nam: Nâng Cao Chất Lượng Giáo Dục Cho Mọi Người Đến Năm 2020 (Vietnam : High Quality Education for All by 2020),” 2011, 10, <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/27450>.

finding is similar to the unemployment rate of men in particular and Vietnamese labour force in general in 2019 Census, in which unemployment rate is highest among those with college degrees, followed by those who finished universities, and those with lower educational levels.¹⁰⁸ This finding signifies the proactivity but also the vulnerability of youth with high educational level in employment when they invest an amount of time in studying and not working as to find a more suitable and long-term job, whereas those with lower educational level can quickly choose an unstable job in an irregular sector.¹⁰⁹

FIGURE 3.1.2. **Employment rate of the research sample (%), N=2,567**



3.1.3.1. Employment qualities

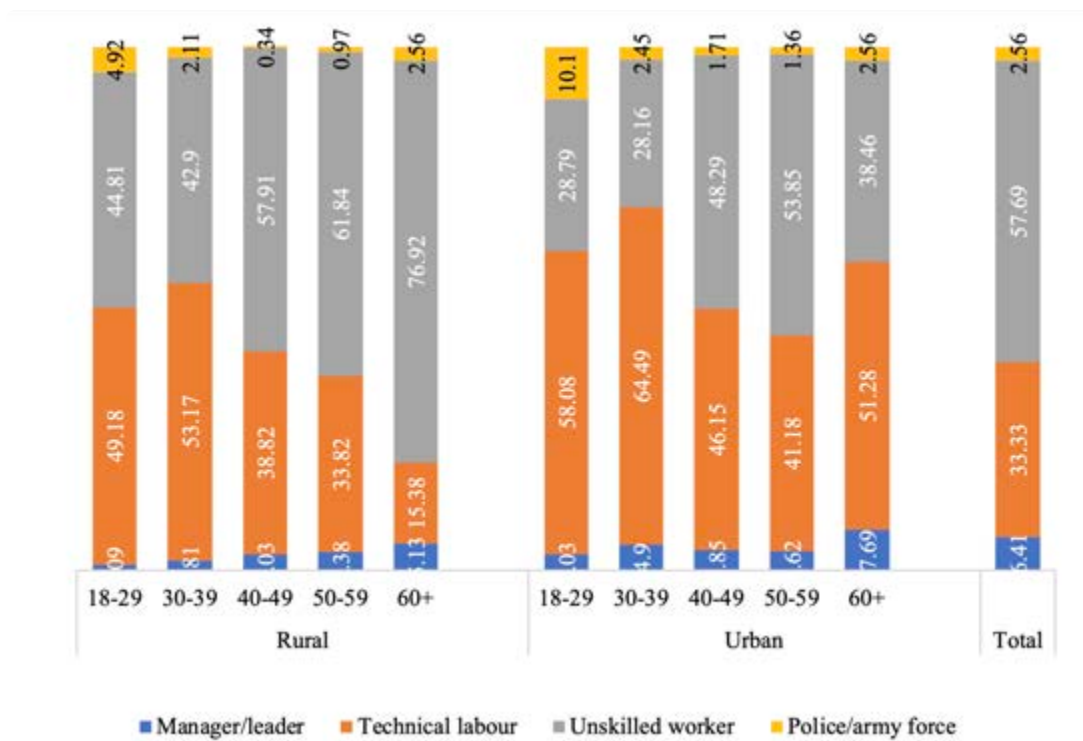
The list of work segments used in the Household Living Standards Survey was utilised here in this research, including four (4) main segments namely Management/ Leadership, Technical labour, Unskilled labour, and Police/ Army force.

108 Tổng cục thống kê / General Statistics Office, 142.

109 Thi Tuyet Tran, "Youth Transition to Employment in Vietnam: A Vulnerable Path," *Journal of Education and Work* 31, no. 1 (2018): 59–71.

Figure 3.1.3 illustrates the work segment of the main job of the research sample. Generally, 3.21% of the sample were in the management/ leadership position, 47.64% were undertaking technical labour works, 46.49% were engaging in unskilled labour, while 2.71% were in police/ army force. In urban areas, technical labour is more common than in rural areas, whereas unskilled labour is more popular in rural areas. Working in agriculture is the common occupation of the research sample. Regarding age groups, the younger age groups between 18-40 years old in urban areas tend to engage in technical labour more than the other age groups. Besides, urban youth also tends to work in police/ army force significantly more than their rural counterparts. This research has also found that urban men have a higher rate of serving in the army for two or more years than rural men.

FIGURE 3.1.3. Work segment of the main occupation of the research sample (%), N=2,567

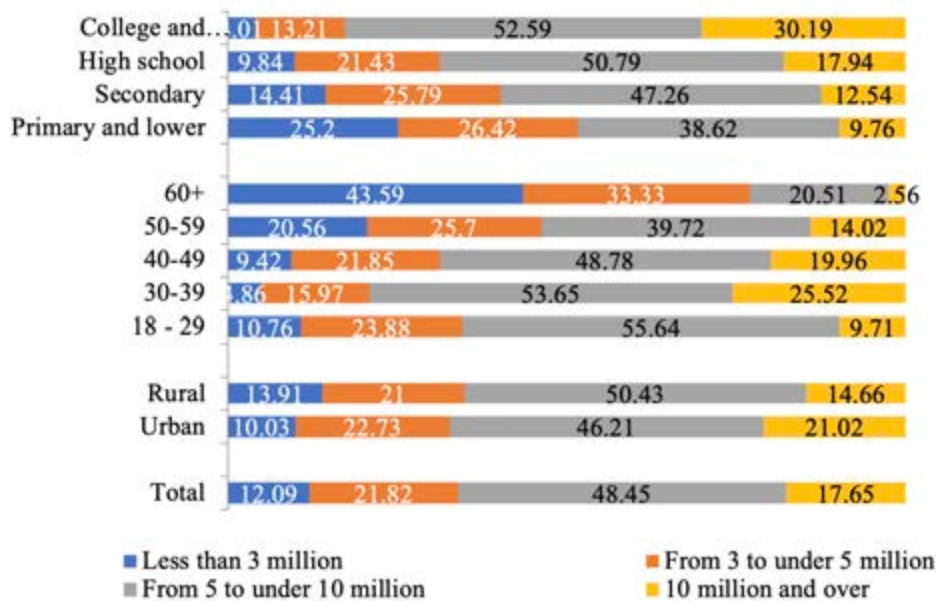


3.1.3.2. Income

Figure 3.1.4 represents the average monthly income of the survey respondents. Almost half of the research sample have an average monthly salary from 5 to under 10 million, followed by 21.82% earning 3-5 million a month, 17.65% with an income of over 10 million a month, and subsequently 12% with less than 3 million monthly salary. It can be seen that the difference in income is most outstanding between those with different educational level. Specifically, educational level is proportional to income, the higher the educational level the higher the income.

This reality matches well with the economic development and labour quality improvement in Vietnam, where a nationwide transition from unskilled labour to knowledge economy has been taking place and higher skills bring better productivity. In terms of age groups, almost 2/3 of the younger group aged 18-29 earn more than 5 million a month. The income is highest among the middle age group of 30-39, then decreases as the age gets higher.

FIGURE 3.1.4. Average monthly income (%), N=1,994



3.1.3.3. Job satisfaction

The survey respondents were asked about their level of satisfaction with their current job according to the aspects listed in table 3.1.2. It can be seen that income, promotion opportunity, and social status are some of the aspects where the survey respondents were least satisfied with, with the satisfaction proportion at only 1/3 of the sample size. About half of the sample size is satisfied with the work pressure, while the other work aspects received about 60-67% level of satisfaction.

TABLE 3.1.2. **Satisfaction with current occupation (%)**

	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	Total
Income	33.33	26.04	32.02	34.58	24.36	30.79
Promotion opportunities	37.53	30.56	30.7	39.44	19.23	31.24
Working time	59.06	61.28	59.7	63.32	61.54	60.88
Social relation	65.62	57.99	57.25	52.57	55.13	57.97
Social status	38.06	35.59	38.23	40.89	43.59	38.21
Work pressure	44.36	44.62	47.65	57.24	73.08	49.2
Partner relation	71.65	64.76	65.73	67.99	76.92	67.5
Working condition	66.67	64.41	62.9	67.76	75.64	65.6

Income pressure on Vietnamese men has always been prevalent given their perceived role of the family's breadwinner, the caretaker of their parents in old age, and the responsibility of ancestor worshipping.¹¹⁰ For single men, income can be a crucial indicator for a good husband who can take care of his future family. Perhaps that is the reason why only ¼ to 1/3 of the sample size in all age groups found their current income satisfying. What stands out is that the age group from 30 to 39 years old, which has the highest educational level, highest employment rate, as well as highest income, turns out to be the group with lowest satisfaction towards their income (satisfaction rate is only higher than 60+ age group). This may be linked to the transition time when a man changes his role from a son to a husband and a father who has to take care of this own family in the early days of their marriage.

3.1.4. Marriage

The majority (over 86%) of the respondents aged 30 or higher reported to be in a relationship at the time of the research. The marriage rate of the young age group from 18-29 years old comprises 26.96%, while the remaining 3/4 have never been married. The marriage rates of the age groups in this research sample are relatively similar to those in 15+ year-old Vietnamese men in the 2019 Census, in which men under 30 years old have the marriage rate at 27.6% whereas the marriage rates in the age groups of 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, and 60+ consist of 83.4%, 92.46%, 93.95%, and 88.06%, respectively.¹¹¹

Among those who have ever been married, the majority was their first marriage (96.3%), the rate of second marriage is 3.61%, and only few have been married three times or more. Most of the survey respondents at the time of the research were living with their family, only 2.14% lived alone and a small number was living with partners, friends, or colleagues. The average size of a household of the research sample (including the respondents and those living together in the same house) was 4.93 (SD=1.83) (table 3.1.3).

110 Christophe Z. Guilmo, "Son Preference, Sex Selection, and Kinship in Vietnam," *Population and Development Review* 38, no. 1 (2012): 31–54, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2012.00471.x>.

111 General Statistics Office (2019) Result of The Vietnam Population and Housing Census 2019), 211.

TABLE 3.1.3. **Marital status and family of the research sample (%), N=2,567**

% or mean (SD)						
	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	Total
Marital status						
Never married	72.23	10.29	3.08	2.53	1.93	17.88
Currently married	26.96	86.51	94.53	94.15	95.75	79.63
Separated/ Divorced	0.8	3.04	2.05	2.53	1.54	2.1
Widowed	0	0.17	0.34	0.79	0.77	0.39
Rate of first marriage	97.83	96.80	97.53	95.46	93.70	96.30
Currently living with						
No one else	3.02	1.69	1.88	2.21	1.93	2.14
Family	95.77	98.15	97.95	97.79	98.07	97.55
Others	1.21	0.17	0.17	0	0	0.31
Household size	4.74 (1.76)	5.04 (1.86)	4.91 (1.50)	5.01 (1.98)	4.92 (2.14)	4.93 (1.83)
N	497	593	585	633	259	2,567

Mean age of first marriage

Mean age of first marriage is an important indicator in demography. The higher the mean age of first marriage is, the longer time one spends as singles, which is related to other issues such as dating, ideal partner image, and perception on sex before marriage. Age of first marriage also marks a crucial turning point in the life of every man from the role of a son to that of a husband and a father in a family. The mean age of first marriage in this research sample is 26.2 years old. This is slightly lower than the age of first marriage recorded in the 2019 Census (27.2).¹¹² The variation of age of first marriage between different groups of living areas, educational level, ethnicity, or eco-social zones indicates a similarity that urban men, or those with higher educational level get married later than rural men or those with lower educational level. (See Table A-3 in the Appendixes for more details of mean age of first marriage of the research sample)

Table 3.1.4 demonstrates factors influencing the mean age of first marriage of the male respondents in this research. In particular, compared to those married in the period from 1973 to 1985, men have a tendency to get married at an older age in the later decades as the mean age of first marriage became higher. This finding is similar to the results from Household Living Standards Survey 2002 and 2008.¹¹³ According to these results, men tend to get married later as

112 Tổng cục thống kê / General Statistics Office, 68.

113 Thanh Binh Nguyen, "Age at First Marriage in Recent Years Vietnam," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 3, no. 1 (2012): 491–96.

they want to attain a more secure education and economic foundation and have a stable living condition. Living in urban areas and having higher educational level also have positive impacts on the increase of median age of first marriage of the research sample. In contrast, being the only son/ the oldest son in the family has an inverse correlation with the age of first marriage, which means those who are the only son or the oldest son of the family often get married for the first time at a younger age than those who are not. This indicates the responsibility of those who are the only son or the oldest son in a family.

TABLE 3.1.4. Regression model of mean age of first marriage by other demographic characteristics

Variables	Coef.	95%CI
Marriage time (vs. 1973-1985)		
1986-1995	2.21***	1.62 – 2.79
1996-2005	3.90***	3.32 – 4.49
2006-2019	4.21***	3.64 – 4.79
Urban living	1.57***	1.20 – 1.94
Educational level (vs. Primary level or less)		
Secondary school	0.55**	0.01 – 1.11
High school	1.50***	0.90 – 2.08
College/ University and higher	2.19***	1.52 – 2.85
Being the only son/ oldest son in the family	-0.72**	-1.15 – -0.30
Being the oldest son in the lineage	0.17	-0.35 – 0.71
R-Square	18.11%	
<i>*p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01.</i>		

3.1.5. Health related issues

3.1.5.1. Physical health

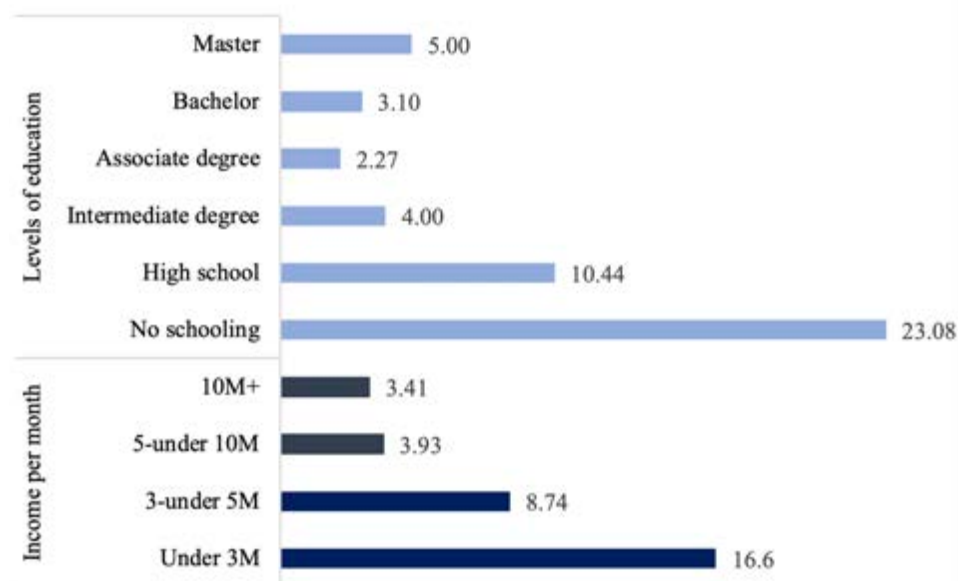
The men participating in the study were asked to rate their own health. Only 35.52% of men rated themselves in good health while 55.32% rated themselves in normal health and 9.16% rated themselves in poor health. Table 3.2.5 below describes in detail the physical health status and frequency of health check-ups of the men participating in the study by age and area. In general, there is no significant difference in health status between urban and rural areas, but there is a difference among the age groups. Young people aged 18-29 and 30-39 in both urban and rural areas are the most confident about their health status among all age groups when 44.92% of young people aged 18-29 in urban areas and 46.67% in rural areas considered themselves in good health; the rates in the age group of 30-39 in urban and rural areas are 48.82% and 41.3% respectively. The rates of good health among the age groups 50 and older are the lowest when only 25.29% of men 50-59 in urban areas and 24.23% in rural areas assessed their health as good; the percentages of men over 60 years old in urban and rural areas are only 15.85% and 17.89%, respectively.

TABLE 3.1.5. Health condition and health check frequency of men by age group and area (%)

	Urban					Rural				
	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
<i>Self-rating of health (%)</i>										
Poor	1.95	2.76	9.84	16.47	18.9	1.66	2.36	9.37	13.99	28.42
Normal	53.13	48.43	51.97	58.24	65.24	51.87	56.34	53.47	61.77	53.68
Good	44.92	48.82	38.19	25.29	15.85	46.47	41.3	37.16	24.23	17.89
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Health check frequency (%)</i>										
Never	45.31	37.8	39.76	42.06	34.15	42.32	41.59	43.81	43	29.47
Once per several years	11.33	13.39	9.45	10	7.32	11.62	11.21	12.69	11.95	9.47
Once per year	26.56	29.13	31.5	22.35	22.56	27.39	30.68	24.47	18.77	7.37
Twice per year	16.8	19.69	19.29	25.59	35.98	18.67	16.52	19.03	26.28	53.68
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	256	254	254	340	164	241	339	331	293	95

What is even more remarkable is the health check frequency of men. The research results show that Vietnamese take this issue lightly. Up to 41.06% of the men interviewed never attend a routine health check. Only 22.61% do health checks every six months and 25.22% do this once a year. Table 3.1.5 above shows that in both rural and urban areas, about 45% of young people aged 18-29 have never been to health check. For the age groups of 30-39, 40-49 and 50-59, the percentages of never having health check in both urban and rural areas are not much different, ranging around 40%. Meanwhile, the age group of over 60 shows the highest rate of health examination every six months, with the rates in urban and rural areas at nearly 36% and 54%, respectively.

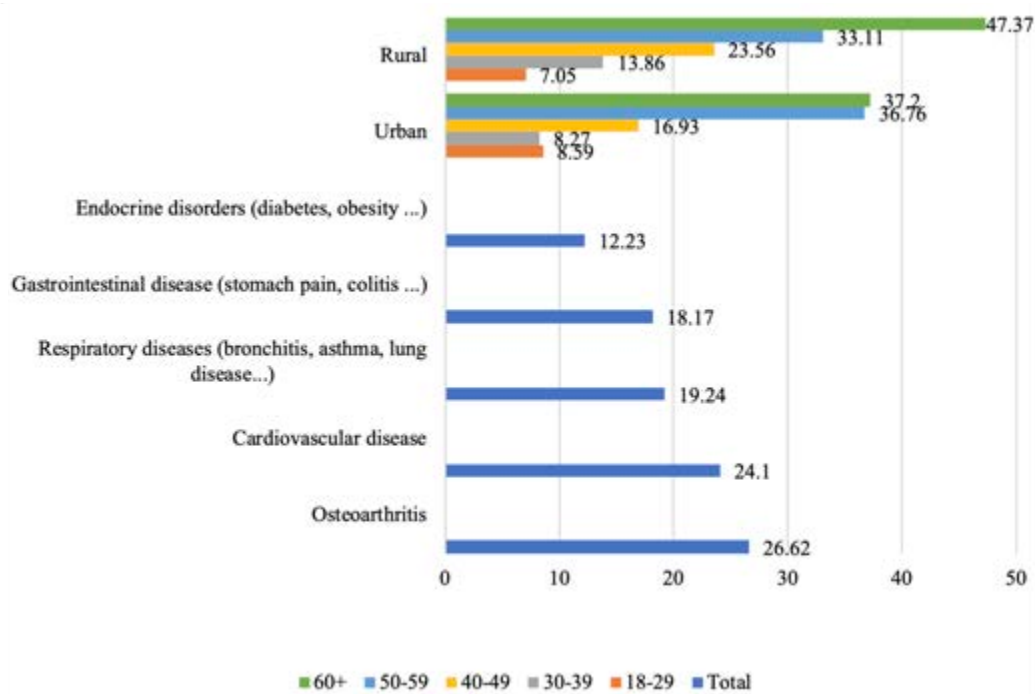
FIGURE 3.1.5. Rate of men having poor health by income and education (%)



We can see that men who do not attend school show the highest proportion of having poor health among the levels of education, up to nearly 25%, followed by the high school graduates with more than 10%. The percentages of men with intermediate, associate, bachelor’s and master’s degrees having poor health are similar. If dividing the data by the average monthly income, we can see that the proportion of men with monthly incomes below 3 million VND having poor health is the highest among the groups, with the rate of more than 16%. This rate tends to decrease when the income level increases, with only more than 3% for the group with monthly income of over 10 million.

21.68% of the men surveyed are chronically ill. Figure 3.1.6 below describe the status of men with chronic diseases participating in the study by age group and area and most common chronic diseases. We can see that the incidence of chronic diseases in both urban and rural areas increases with age. In urban areas, about 37% of men in the age groups 50-59 and over 60 are chronically ill while only about 8% of men in the age groups 18-29 and 30-39 suffer from chronic illness. Similarly, in rural areas, more than 33% of men aged 50-59 and nearly 50% of men aged over 60 reported that they have a chronic disease, while these percentages in the 18-29 and 30-39 age groups are only about 7% and 14%, respectively.

FIGURE 3.1.6. Rate of men having chronic diseases and most common chronic diseases



The most common chronic diseases are osteoarthritis (26.62%), cardiovascular disease (24.10%), respiratory disease (19.24%), gastrointestinal disease (18.17%) and endocrine diseases (12.23%). The prevalence of cardiovascular disease (24.10%) shows the similarity with the results of the national survey on risk factors of non-communicable diseases conducted by the Ministry of Health indicating that 23.1% of men have high blood pressure.¹¹⁴

3.1.5.2. Accidents and injuries

Table 3.1.6 below describes the accident rate of Vietnamese men. Among the three types of accidents, traffic accident rates are the highest at 24.92% in urban areas and 21.86% in rural areas.

TABLE 3.1.6. **Accident rates among men (%)**

	Urban	Rural	Total
Traffic accident	24.92	21.86	23.37
Occupational accident	9.78	12.47	11.14
Daily life accident	6.62	6.54	6.58
N	1,268	1,299	2,567

Traffic safety is a top concern, directly affecting the physical health of Vietnamese men. Traffic accident deaths are always at the top of the list of causes of death in Vietnam, and men between the ages of 18 and 55 account for the majority of those who die from traffic accidents each year. This study does not analyse in depth the causes of traffic accidents (such as driving a car or motorbike, etc.) but we can refer to some other statistics. According to statistics from the National Traffic Safety Committee, in the first 10 months of 2019, the whole country had 14,251 traffic accidents, killing 6,318 people and injuring 10,873 people. Everyday traffic accidents cause losses of VND 350 to 500 billion for the country (National Traffic Safety Committee 2019). Also, according to this study, among all traffic accidents, there were nearly 70% of incidents caused by motorbike drivers. In particular, nearly 90% of the victims of traffic accidents were motorbike drivers. In addition, according to a WHO research in 2018, the number of traffic accident deaths in Vietnam was quite high compared to other countries in the world, accounting for 0.5% of the total number of traffic accident deaths in the world.¹¹⁵

Occupational accidents are also a cause for concern with 11.14% of the men who participated in the study said they ever had an occupational accident. More the rural men have occupational accidents than the urban men (12.47% versus 9.78%). The rates of daily life accidents in urban and rural areas do not differ significantly and are the least common of the three types of accidents. Data from this study are quite consistent with the results of the 2019 Population

114 Ministry of Health (MOH), "National Survey on the Risk Factors of Non-Communicable Diseases (STEP) Vietnam 2015" (Hanoi: General Department of Prevention Medicine, 2016).

115 World Health Organization (WHO) and Violence and Injury Prevention, Global Status Report on Road Safety Time for Action. (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2009).

and Housing Census. According to the census results, traffic accidents are the most common cause of death to men with the overall rate of 5.9% (urban is 4.5%, rural is 6.4%); occupational accidents account for 1.6% of the causes of death (1.2% in urban areas, 1.7% in rural areas).¹¹⁶

3.1.5.3. Mental health and pressure in life

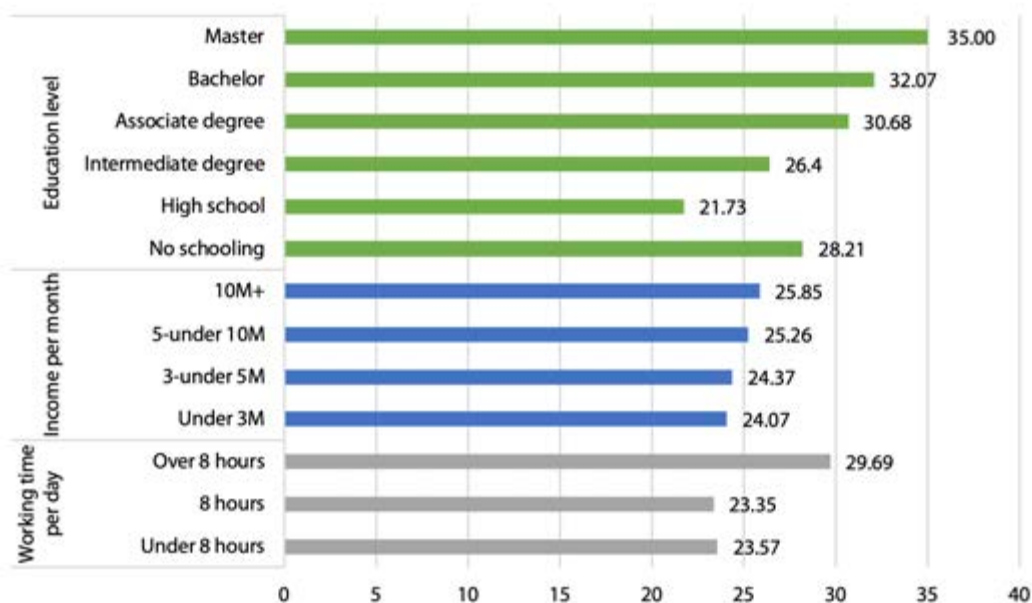
Among the men who participated in the study, nearly a quarter admitted that they feel pressured in life. Table 3.1.7 below describes in detail the stress situation of the men participating in the study by age group and area. As can be seen in both urban and rural areas, the pressure seems to diminish with age. Nearly one-third of the youngest male groups in both urban and rural areas feel pressured in life, while this happens to less than one fifth of those aged 50 and over.

TABLE 3.1.7. Accident rates among men (%)

	Urban					Rural				
	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Feeling pressured (%)	32.42	29.13	26.77	16.76	16.46	33.61	27.43	17.82	17.06	14.74
N	256	254	254	340	164	241	339	331	293	95

Figure 3.1.7 below depicts the proportion of men who experience pressure in life by the average time they work a day, their average income per month and their education level.

FIGURE 3.1.7. Rate of men feeling pressured by working time, income and education level



116 Tổng cục thống kê / General Statistics Office, Kết Quả Tổng Điều Tra Dân Số và Nhà ở 2019 (Result of The Vietnam Population and Housing Census 2019).

We can see that working time seems to be related to the pressure that men face in life when the ratio of men working over eight hours a day being under pressure is the largest among the three groups, with nearly 30%. In addition, men with higher incomes are at higher risk of being stressed when the proportion of men earning more than 10 million a month being under pressure is the highest among the groups (25.85%); however, the difference in the proportion of men being under pressure among the income levels is not large.

Accordingly, the proportions of men experiencing pressure in life tend to increase with education levels. About 20% of men who graduated from high school experience stress in their lives while more than one-third of men with a master's degree feel stressed out in life. However, the proportion of men who do not go to school feeling the pressure in life is also relatively large, approximately 28%.

The men participating in the study were asked about specific issues that made them feel pressured in life out of 11 issues raised, including career (study, work, etc.), housing/accommodation, marriage, children, family relationships (parents, spouses, siblings), relationships with relatives, health, appearance, financial status (earning money), social status and other social relationships. Study participants were asked to choose three issues that made them feel the most pressure. Figure 3.1.8 below depicts the causes of stress in men's life by area. Accordingly, finance and careers are the two issues that put the greatest pressure on both rural and the urban men. More than 80% of men in both urban and rural areas feel pressured by the financial status, and nearly 70% feel pressured for careers. The remaining issues such as health, children, family relations, social relations or housing create different pressures for the rural men and the urban men. For example, more than 32% of the rural men reported that their children are one of the most stressful issues, while only 26% of the urban men reported it being one of the most stressful issues.

FIGURE 3.1.8. **Causes of stress by area**

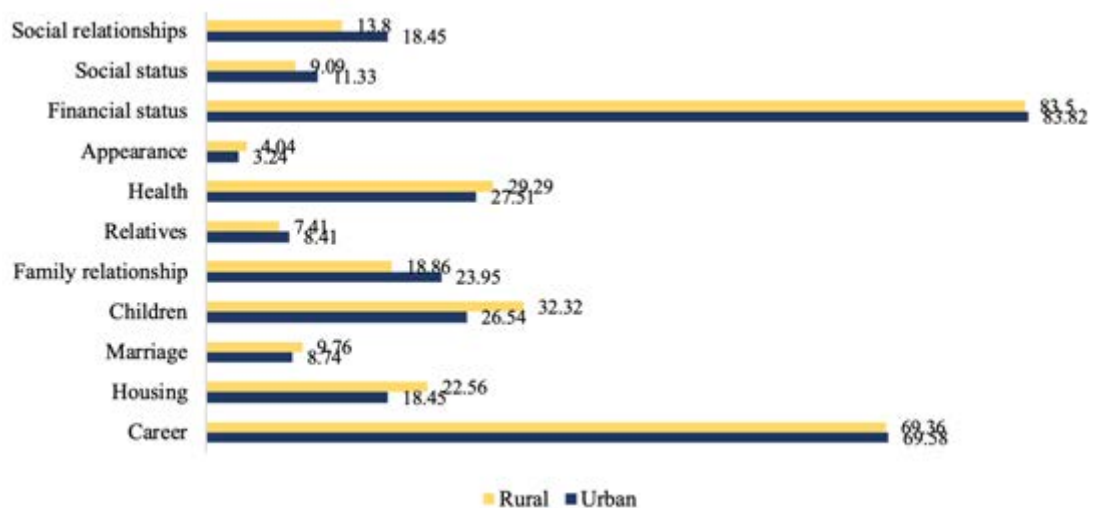


Table 3.1.8 below describes quite interesting differences in the pressures in the life of men of the age groups. Career is the most pressing issue for young people aged 18-29 with more than 85%, but earning money is the most pressing problem for the remaining age groups. In addition, children and health are issues that make the age group 50 and older worry more than the other three age groups.

TABLE 3.1.8. Causes of stress by age group (%)

	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Career	85.37	73.65	65.35	55.14	39.02
Financial status	78.66	85.63	89.76	85.98	70.73
Housing	20.12	22.75	16.54	24.3	14.63
Marriage	14.63	8.98	6.3	5.61	7.32
Children	6.1	30.54	41.73	43.93	41.46
Family relationship	20.73	23.35	18.9	20.56	26.83
Relatives relationship	10.37	5.39	7.09	5.61	17.07
Health	18.9	20.96	33.07	37.38	58.54
Appearance	10.98	1.8	0.79	0	0
Social status	13.41	12.57	7.09	5.61	9.76
Social relationships	20.73	14.37	13.39	15.89	14.63
<i>N</i>	164	167	127	107	41

Here are some of the men’s shares in the in-depth interviews about the pressure they face in life.

The most pressing issue for me is earning money. Because at this age, I sometimes see my friends having more assets than me, I feel pressured. When comparing myself to others, I want to be equal or better.

IDI, male, 28 years old, Hanoi

I feel stressed mostly about work such as meeting deadlines and solving problems at work. As for salary and spending issues, pressure is still not available at the present although we do not know how it will become when we have children in the future. My wife and I are raising the intention to buy a house and rent it when we are old. When we retire, we plan to live on our pension plus rent.

IDI, male, 29 years old, Hanoi

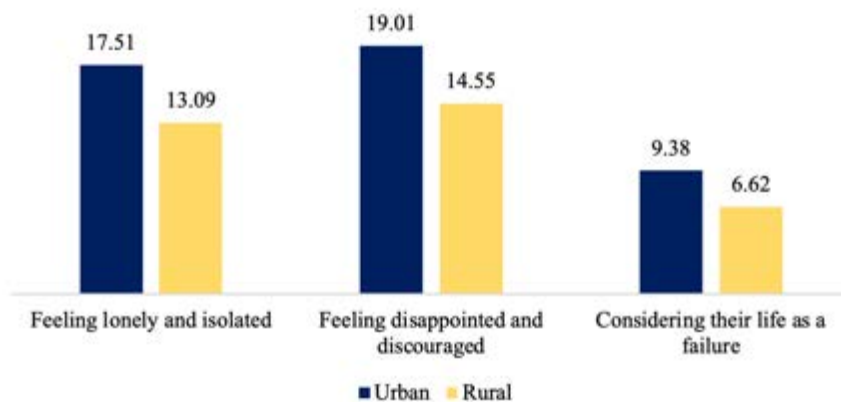
What makes me stressed is what I should do when I don’t know much about technology in this 4.0 era. There is something I know, something I do not know yet. I do not have

enough financing to hire people to do for me. Even though I don't have the capital, I don't want to borrow it. If I want to have a hostel now, I have to borrow more than 1 billion, so I have to pay tens of millions every month. When I can't make it, there's no money to pay the workers."

IDI, male, 40 years old, Hoa Binh

The men participating in the study were also asked about the negative moods and emotions they experienced in the last 12 months. Looking at Figure 3.1.10, we can see that, although there may be higher living standards as well as greater access to modern technology, the urban males tend to experience more negative feelings than the rural men.

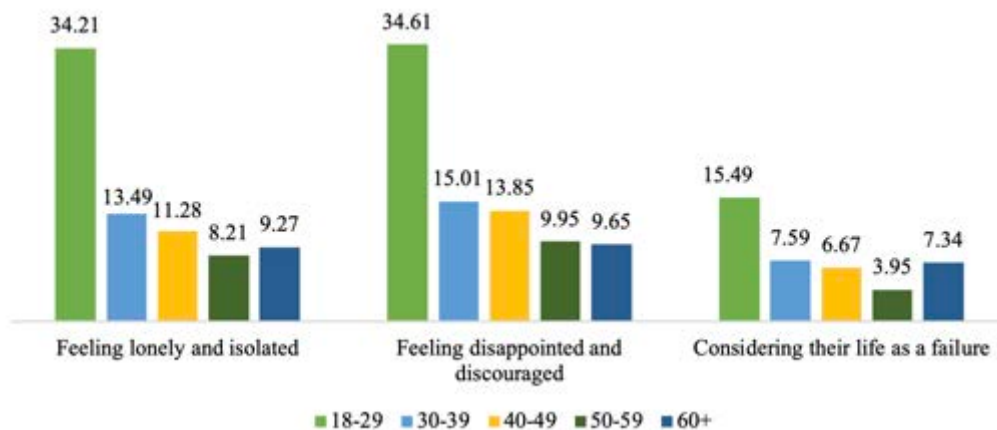
FIGURE 3.1.9. Rates of men experiencing negative feelings for the last 12 months by area
N=2,567



If 13.09% of the rural men participating in the study reported feeling lonely, the rate for the urban males is 17.51%. Up to 19.01% of the urban men surveyed admitted feeling disappointed and discouraged, while only 14.55% of the rural men admitted having this feeling.

Figure 3.1.11 below depicts the proportion of men being in a negative mood for the most recent 12 months by age. It is worth noting that the proportion of young people aged 18-29 experiencing negative emotions is much higher than the remaining age groups. More than one-third of 18-29-year-old men surveyed said they felt lonely or depressed, while the proportions in the remaining age groups fluctuate around 10%.

FIGURE 3.1.10. Rates of men experiencing negative feelings for the last 12 months by age group, N=2,567



Nearly 3% of the men participating in the study shared that they had attempted suicide. If only 2.08% of the rural men participating in the study ever attempted suicide, this rate is 3.94% for the urban men. It is noteworthy that the rate of young men intending to commit suicide is rather high. Specifically, 5.43% of men in the 18-29 age group admitted they ever attempted suicide and the rates decrease gradually by age group (see table 3.1.9).

TABLE 3.1.9. Rates of men ever thinking about committing suicide by age group

	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Ever thinking about committing suicide (%)	5.43	3.71	2.05	1.58	2.32
N	497	593	585	633	259

According to the 2010 national survey on Adolescents and Youth in Vietnam, 4.1% of adolescents aged 14-25 thought about suicide, and urban adolescents were more likely to commit suicide than their rural counterparts. WHO’s 2000 review on the health and development of adolescent boys also show that, in general, boys and young men show higher rates of mortality than girls and young women as a result of violence, accidents and suicide.¹¹⁷ Moreover, men experience the pressure to be “real men” and to live up to the prevailing standards of masculinity by which men assess themselves and others.¹¹⁸

117 World Health Organization (WHO), “What about Boys? A Literature Review on the Health and Development of Adolescent Boys” (World Health Organization, 2000), <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/66487>.

118 Kedia, S. and Verma, R, “Gender Norms and Masculinities: A Topic Guide.”

What makes more than 5% of young Vietnamese men want to commit suicide? Further research is needed to answer this disturbing question.

3.1.5.4. Sexual health

This section presents the findings of men who have had sex. The vast majority (90%) of the men participating in this study had sex with other people. Those who have never had sex are primarily in the 18-29 age group. In particular, the age of first sex was 11 years old, and up to 14.8% of men had sex for the first time before the age of 18. This information is quite important to develop appropriate sex and relationship education programs for teenagers.

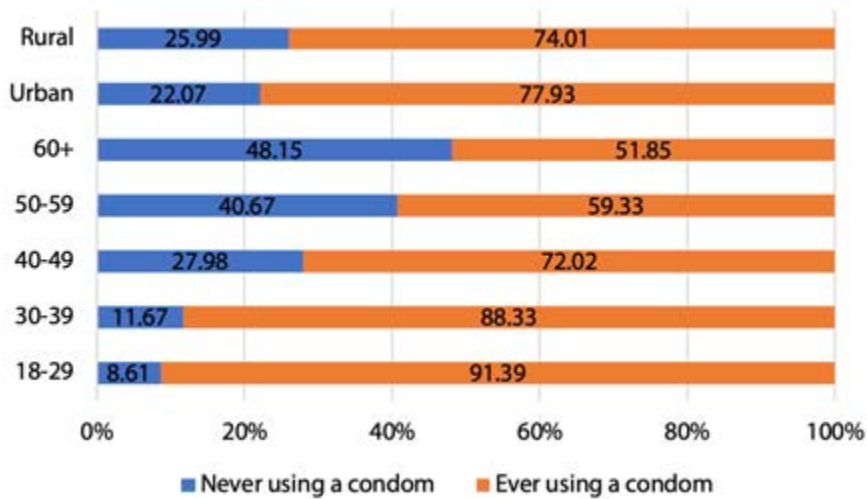
From the first sexual intercourse to the time of the study, 60% of the men surveyed had sex with only one person; about 35.5% had sex with 2 to 10 people, and there are a few (more than 1%) used to have sex with more than 50 people. For sexual partners, 99.7% of men only had sex with women and the rest had sex with men. One case reported having sex with around 40 male partners. In general, the interviewed men stated that they were the ones who took the initiative, or both sides took the initiative (more than 99%) during sex. Regarding protected sex, among men who have ever had sex, only 25.78% used condoms during their last sexual intercourse. The older the age, the lower the rate of condom use (see table 3.1.10 below).

TABLE 3.1.10. **Rate of men using condom in the last sex**

	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Using condom in the last sex (%)	55.48	33.8	25.39	11.72	7.06
N	310	568	579	623	255

1 in 3 men reported having sex with someone not their wives or lovers, half of them were middle aged (49.5%). Among men who have had sex with other than their wives/ lovers, nearly half occasionally use a condom during sex (45.8%) and nearly a quarter never use condoms (23.9%). Figures 3.1.11 below depict the proportion of men who use condoms when having sex with non-wives/lovers by area and age group.

FIGURE 3.1.11. Rate of men using condoms when having sex with non-wives/lovers by and age group, N= 703



We can see that the proportion of the rural men who do not use condoms when having sex with non-wives/lovers is higher than that of the urban men (25.99% versus 22.07%). In particular, Figure 3.1.11 also shows that for every 10 men in the age groups of 50-59 and over 60 who have sex with non-wives/lovers, around 5 people never use condoms. These figures are quite alarming and reflect the importance of promoting sexual safety for a diverse range of male groups, including those who are old and have been married for many years.

About 1 in 10 men reported ever having sex with a sex worker. Among those who ever bought sex, most of them used money or in kind to have sex less than 5 times (76.6%), but nearly 10% used money or in kind to have sex from 10 times up to 60 times, and especially there are cases of trading or exchanging for sex more than 100 to 200 times. The urban men spend more money or in kind in exchange for sex than the rural men (13.6% compared to 8.4%), and younger men are more likely to engage in this behaviour than older men (nearly 17% in the 18-29 group compared to nearly 12% in the 30-39 group and about 10% in the 40-49, 50-59 and 60+ groups). These ratios, when viewed together with the proportion of men who do not use condoms when having sex outside of formal sex, once again show the presence of risks in sexual behaviour of some men, especially among the older groups.

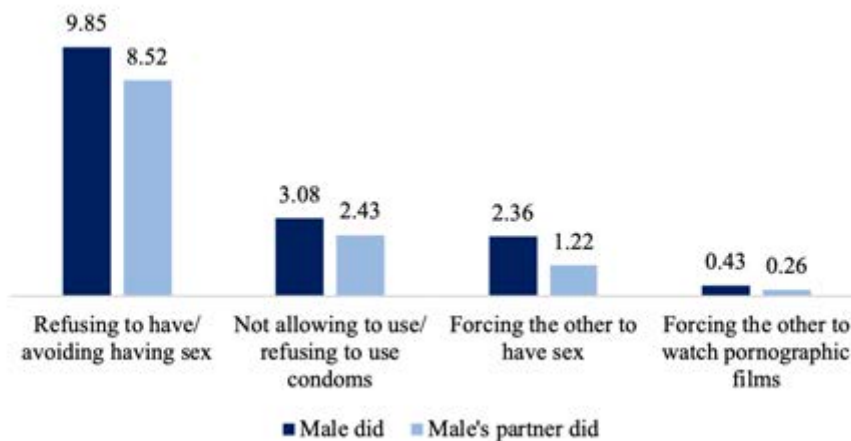
Nearly half (42.7%) of the interviewed men have watched or read pornographic products. The youngest age when men first watched these products was 7 years old. Up to 3 in 10 men watched pornography before they turn 18. Table 3.1.11 below shows the percentage of men who have ever watched or read pornographic products by age group.

TABLE 3.1.11. **Rate of men ever watching/reading pornographic products**

	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Ever watching/reading pornographic products (%)	67.81	55.65	35.56	25.91	22.39
N	497	593	585	633	259

We can see that the proportion of young men aged 18-29 who have ever used porn products is the highest among all age groups, reaching nearly 68%.

Figure 3.1.12 below depicts the proportion of men/partners who commit sexual violence against their partners.

FIGURE 3.1.12. **Sexual violence between men and women by behaviour (%), N=2,335**

The most frequent behaviour is the refusal or avoidance of sexual intercourse for a long time from both men (9.85%) and from partners (8.52%). The next most common type of violent behaviour from both men and their partners is not allowing to use/ refusing to use condoms during sexual intercourse, with 3.08% and 2.43%, respectively. For the act of forcing the partner to have sex when the partner does not want to, the percentage of men who have this behaviour is nearly double the rate of those who are forced by their partners (2.36% and 1.22%).

Because there have been many studies focusing on the topic of sexuality for both men and women in Vietnam, this study decided not to delve into this topic but to focus on issues such as pressure of life, risk behaviours, as well as the concepts of masculinity and gender equality awareness of men. Through our quantitative and qualitative research, it can be seen that sex

is one of the topics of interest of men, but for Vietnamese men, sex life is not an important matter which evaluates the success of a man. This is also consistent with the Vietnamese social culture when sex, although it can appear in a few conversations when meeting with male friends, is still a private topic and not a measure of the social success of a man.

3.1.6. Risk behaviours

The participants in the study were asked about the conduct of risk behaviours (listed) that affect the health and lives of themselves and those around them. Table 3.1.12 describes the rate of men who have ever performed risk behaviours, the frequency of risk behaviour in the 12 months closest to the time of the study, and the average age of first-time doing such behaviour.

TABLE 3.1.12. Rates of men doing risk behaviour and average age of first-time doing, N=2,567

	In last 12 months (%)			Average age of first-time doing
	Ever done before (%)	Not always (<5 times)	Always (>6 times)	
Smoking	67.74	17.71	55.26	18
Drinking to drunkenness*	58.24	48.36	9.1	22
Betting, gambling	8.73	34.38	2.68	22
Engaging in fight with dangerous items	4.32	8.11	1.8	18
Using substances or/and drugs	0.97	24	8	19
Administrative violations**	23.41	19.47	0.67	27
Detention for violating the law	1.91	4.08	0	22

* Drinking alcohol to drunkenness is a situation in which a drinker is no longer awake to be able to control his behaviour. This not only affects their health and lives but also affects the health and lives of people around them. Men often drink alcohol with friends (who are also men), relatives or business partners.
 **Administrative violations are violations of law and are subject to administrative sanctions (by paying fines) rather than being examined for penal liability. Some typical examples of administrative violations are violations of traffic laws, indiscriminate dumping of waste and public urination.

We can see that smoking is the most common risk behaviour when about 7 out of every 10 men have ever smoked and 5 out of 10 smoke regularly in the 12 months closest to the time of the study. The prevalence of smoking in this study is significantly higher than the national survey (45.3%) conducted in 2015.¹¹⁹ Drinking alcohol to drunkenness is the second most common risk behaviour of the men participating in the study. 6 in 10 men admitted having been drunk at least once in their lives. 5 out 10 said they had been drunk at least once in the last 12 months and 1 out of 10 had got drunk over 6 times. When researching the reasons, 1 in 2 men reported having been forced to drink alcohol and 1 in 3 reported being unable to refuse to drink”. The

119 World Health Organization, “Global Adult Tobacco Survey Fact Sheet,” 2015, <https://www.who.int/tobacco/surveillance/survey/gats/vnm/en/>.

main reason given is that they were “afraid of making people unhappy” (73.62%) and “afraid of losing relationships” (26.60%). Other reasons such as “fear of losing face”, “fear of losing business/promotion opportunities” account for small percentages (<10%). Alcohol use has been a symbol of manhood and manliness in most countries for centuries. Alcohol frequently plays a significant role in the “entrance to manhood”, and thereafter the behaviour naturally affirms one’s masculinity. A recent research found that men who subscribe to hegemonic masculine norms are more likely to drink to intoxication and to experience alcohol-related problems.¹²⁰

Administrative violations are also common risk behaviour among men when nearly one quarter (23.4%) of the men surveyed said that they had committed administrative violations at least once. In addition, other acts such as participating in betting, gambling, fighting with items that cause damage, using stimulants and being detained for violating the law have ever been implemented low. much better (both below 10%).

The average age of men performing the above risk behaviours for the first time is quite young. Table 3.1.13 below describes in more detail the average age at which men first-time drinking to drunkenness and smoking by age group.

TABLE 3.1.13. **Age of drinking to drunkenness and smoking for the first time**

	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Age of drinking to drunkenness for the first time	18	20	21	24	25
N	300	399	363	325	108
Age of smoking for the first time	17	19	19	18	19
N	250	339	427	517	206

We can see that men of the 18-29 age group show the lowest the average age of first-time drinking to drunkenness and smoking (18 and 17 years old respectively). Table 3.1.14 below describes the proportion of men who have ever conducted risk behaviours by age group. In general, with the exception of smoking, the younger the male, the more likely he is to commit risk behaviours.

120 Ragonese, C., Shand, T., and Barker, G., “Masculine Norms and Men’s Health: Making the Connections” (Washington, DC: Promundo US, 2019), https://promundoglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Masculine-Norms-Mens-Health-Report_007_Web.pdf.

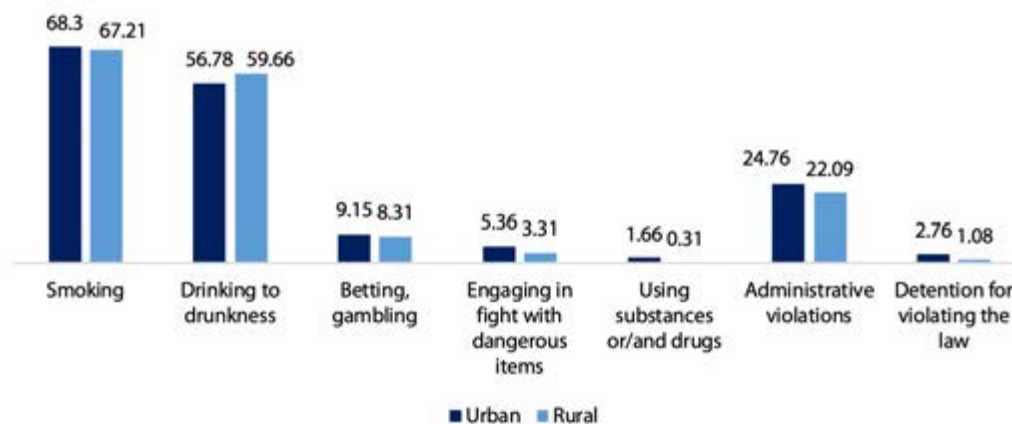
TABLE 3.1.14. Rate of men doing risk behaviour by age group

	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Smoking	50.3	57.17	72.99	81.67	79.54
Drinking to drunkenness	60.36	67.28	62.05	51.34	41.7
Betting, gambling	13.08	11.97	8.89	4.9	1.93
Engaging in fight with dangerous items	9.86	6.24	2.56	1.26	0.77
Using substances or/and drugs	2.01	1.35	0.68	0.47	0
Administrative violations**	35.61	32.38	20.17	14.38	8.88
Detention for violating the law	3.62	1.69	2.56	0.63	0.77
<i>N</i>	497	593	585	633	259

Specifically, more than half of 18-29-year-old men have ever smoked, and these rates reach about 80% in the age group 50-59 and over 60 years old. However, for the act of drinking alcohol to drunkenness, for every 10 young men aged 18-29, there are up to 6 having ever done this behaviour, while for the group of over 60, the rate is only over 40 %. For administrative violations, about one-third of males aged 18-29 and 30-39 have ever been sanctioned, but this rate in the over-60 age group is only nearly 10%. The remaining risk behaviours also show that the proportion of men aged 18-29 performing such behaviour is the highest among all age groups.

Figure 3.1.13 below depicts the proportion of men who have ever committed risk behaviour by area. Smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol to drunkenness and committing administrative violations are still the three most common risk behaviours in both urban and rural areas. The proportion of men who engage in risk behaviours in urban areas is generally higher than in rural areas, although this disparity is not clear. For example, the smoking rate in urban areas is 68.3% while the in rural areas is slightly lower at 67.21%.

FIGURE 3.1.13. Rate of men doing risk behaviour by area N=2,567



The research team conducted linear regression analysis to investigate the factors that influence the conduct of risk behaviours among men. The dependent variable is the frequency at which risk behaviours are performed, and the independent variables includes age, education, income and area (urban versus rural). The results are described in the following table.

TABLE 3.1.15. **Results of regression model of predicting risk behaviours**

Variable	R ² =.035	
	Coefficient	p value
Age	-.16	.00
Education	-.13	.00
Income	.05	.04
Urban (vs. rural)	.05	.03

As a result of the above model, the age, education, income and area (urban versus rural) are statistically significant in predicting the frequency of risk behaviour among men (p value <.05). Accordingly, the older the male the less likely he is to conduct risk behaviour (B = -.16, p value=.00). Similarly, the more educated the men is, the less likely he is to engage in risk behaviour (B=-0.13, p value= .00). In contrast, the regression model results show that the higher the individual income, the more likely the man is to perform risk behaviour (B =.05, p value=.04). High-income men may often have to entertain guests or maintain social and business relationships, so they often have to drink alcohol. They may also face a lot of pressure at work, so they may turn to cigarettes as a way to relieve the pressure. Further studies are needed to understand the cause of this problem. In addition, the regression model results show that men in urban areas are more likely to engage in risk behaviours than men in rural areas (B=.05, p value=.03). Further studies also need to be done to clarify this issue.

Violations of traffic rules

As mentioned above, traffic safety is a concern for Vietnamese men because it directly affects their physical health, as well as traffic accident is one of the leading causes of death to men. Figure 3.1.14 and Table 3.1.16 below illustrate the traffic violation rate of men by age and area in the 12 months closest to the time of the study.

FIGURE 3.1.14. Rate of men violating traffic regulations (sometimes and usual) for the last 12 months

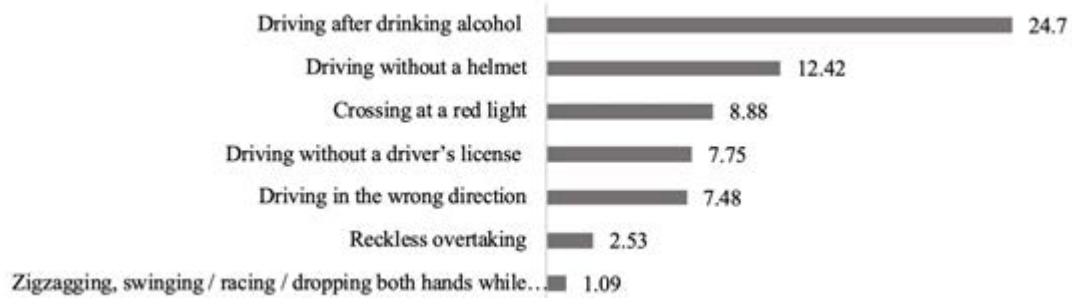


TABLE 3.1.16. Rate of men violating traffic regulations (sometimes and usual) for the last 12 months by age group and area

	Urban					Rural				
	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Crossing at a red light	16.15	7.09	4.12	2.44	10.97	15.35	5.89	6.04	3.07	3.16
Driving without a helmet*	22.66	15.75	8.27	5.59	3.66	22.4	16.52	10.58	8.87	4.21
Reckless overtaking	10.15	3.15	1.57	0.29	0	7.05	1.76	0.6	0.34	0
Zigzagging, swinging / racing / dropping both hands while driving	5.08	1.57	0	0	0	3.73	0.59	0	0	0
Driving in the wrong direction	19.93	10.23	6.69	2.35	4.27	11.61	5.6	7.55	2.73	3.16
Driving without a driver's license**	13.28	5.91	4.33	4.7	3.05	14	7.08	9.67	7.85	5.26
Driving after drinking alcohol ***	26.18	31.5	25.98	18.53	10.37	33.61	26.25	28.7	21.5	13.69

*For driving a motor cycle
 *, *** Including driving a motor cycle or a car

In general, young people aged 18-29 are more likely to commit traffic offenses than the other four age groups. The older the man, the less likely he is to violate traffic laws. There are differences between rural and urban areas, depending on the type of behaviour.

Driving after drinking alcohol is the most common traffic violation for the men participating in the study when 1 out of 4 male respondents admitted doing it occasionally or often. The rates tend to decrease with men over 50 years old. Specifically, more than a quarter (26.18%) of young men aged 18-29 in urban areas occasionally/often drive after drinking alcohol and about one third (33.61%) of young males in rural areas do this; meanwhile, in the group of over 60, in urban and rural areas, the proportions are only above 10% and 13%, respectively.

Not wearing a helmet is the second most common traffic violation among the surveyed men when the rate is over 12%. 18-29-year-old males in both urban and rural areas are the most likely to do it among all age groups when 1 in 5 young men admitted occasionally/often not wearing helmet when riding a motorbike.

Crossing the red light is also a common traffic violation among the men participating in the study, with 8.88% of the respondents saying they occasionally or often cross the red light in the 12 months closest to the time of the study. 18-29-year-old men continue to lead the way in doing this behaviour in both urban and rural areas, with the rates of 16.15% and 15.35%, respectively. These rates tend to decrease as the age groups increase.

In order to further analyse the factors affecting traffic violations, the research team performed linear regression analysis with the frequency of traffic violation as the dependent variable. The independent variables include age, education, income and area (urban versus rural). The regression analysis results are described in the following table.

TABLE 3.1.17. **Results of regression model of predicting traffic violation**

Variable	R ² =.085	
	Coefficient	p value
Age	-.29	.00
Education	-.04	.11
Income	.03	.14
Urban (vs. rural)	.03	.21

According to the above results, only the “age” variable is statistically significant in predicting the frequency at which traffic violations are committed (p value <0.05), while the remaining variables such as education, income and area are not statistically significant (p value > 0.05). As we can see, the younger the male, the more likely he is to commit traffic violations (B=-.29, p value=.00).

3.1.7. Representation in the social life

3.1.7.1. Men’s participation in socio-political organizations

Socio-political organizations (commonly referred as mass organizations) often have their vertical structures down from the central level to grassroots level, they work as the Party’s bridging arms and play relatively important roles in communities’ social life, particularly in maintaining social safety and security and mobilizing citizens to engage in new community-based movements such as “All citizens in the community unite to build a new happy life”, “the cultured family”, and the program “building a new countryside” which has been strongly promoted in recent years.

There were more than half of the surveyed men who reported they were members of one or several socio-political organizations (52.5%). There is not much difference in the participation in socio-political groups between rural and urban men ((53.35% and 51.58% respectively).

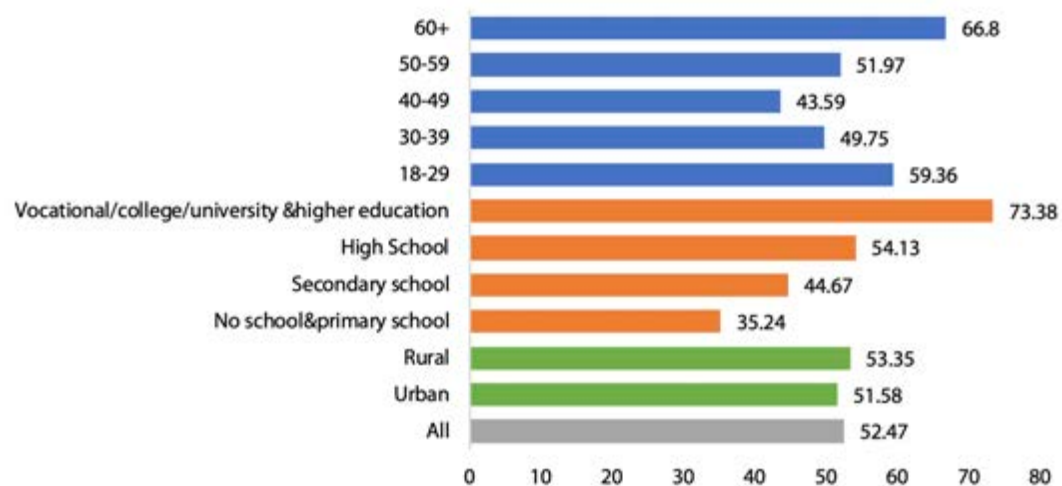
According to age groups, men in the age group 60+ and men in the age group 18-29 consist of highest percentage of participation in socio-political organizations (respectively 66.8% and 59.36%).

Men of different age groups engage in different socio-political organization, for instance the Youth Union consist of high proportion of younger group (men of 18-29 age group consist of 57.87% and men of age group 30-39 consist of 24.68%). Other socio-political organizations such as the Communist Party, the Fatherland Front, the Farmer Association or the Veteran Association consist higher number of members of older age groups.

The proportion of the respondents who were members of the Trade Union was high among age group from 30-49 (19.0%) and among group of vocational/college and higher education (34.0%) as the majority of men working in paid employment are at those active working ages with relatively higher educational levels.

Men who have higher level of education tend to engage in socio-political organizations more than those who have lower education level. (see Figure 3.1.15)

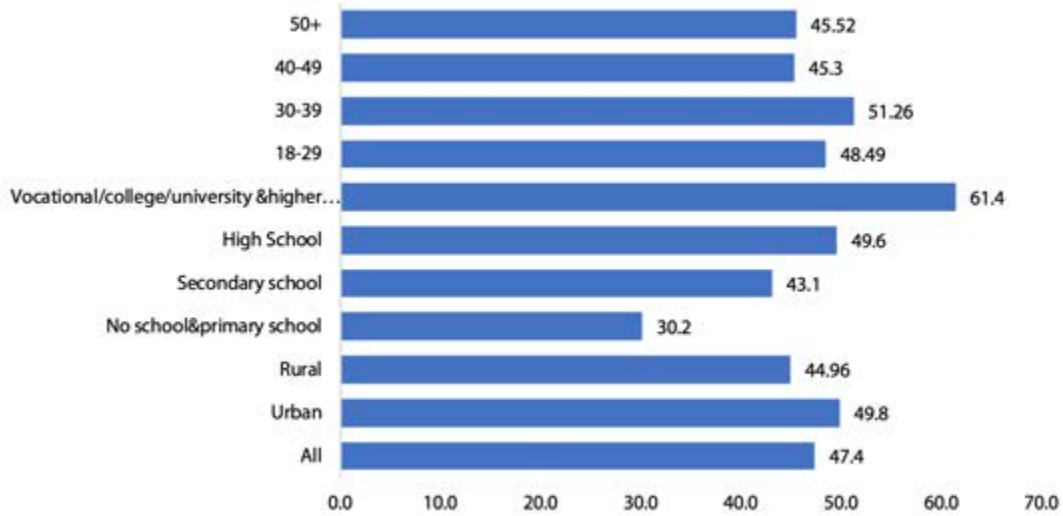
FIGURE 3.1.15. Proportion of men engaging in socio-political organization according to area of living, age group and education level



3.1.7.2. Participation in informal social network

In addition to engaging in socio-political organizations, men seem to have rich social life as they also engage in various social groups including different professional groups, interest/hobbies groups and other social groups (such as charitable, education encouragement, martial arts, credit groups, etc.). There were about 47% of the surveyed men who were involved in one or several groups of such kind. (see Figure 3.1.16).

FIGURE 3.1.16. Proportion of men engaging one or more social groups/clubs



Social groups are classified into four main ones: peer groups (including either same age group; same military unit; classmates), professional group, hobby (who share the same hobby or interest, such as pet, ornamental trees planting, photo shooting, chess, etc.), and credit group/tontine.

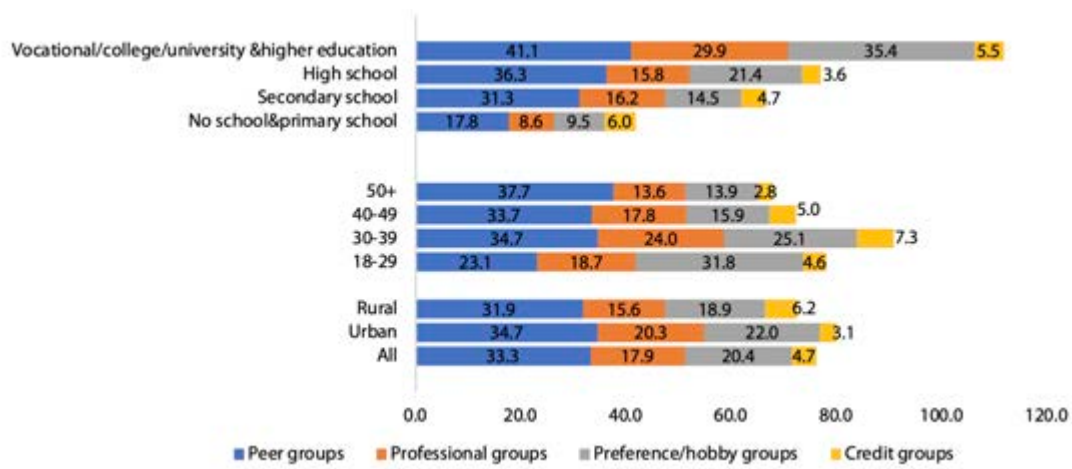
Data in the Figure 3.1.16 indicates that there was no significant difference between rural and urban respondents regarding frequencies of group attendance, either different peer groups or professional ones. The proportion of rural men and that of urban men who engaged in different social groups did not vary much (49.8% in rural area and 45% in urban area). However, the proportion of men engaging in social groups was much higher in men who had highest level of education (61.4%) compared to men having lower education levels (which varies from 30.2% to 49.6%).

The proportion of men engaging in different social groups differed according to the area of living, age group, and level of education. Data in Figure 3.1.17 show that urban men had higher participation of professional and hobby groups compared to those of rural men. Regarding age groups, men of the young age groups 18-29 and 30-39 tend to have higher proportion of engaging in hobby groups (31.8% and 25.1% respectively) and only 13.9% of men aged 50 and above engage in hobby groups. In the opposite, men in older age groups (30-39; 40-49 and 50+) had higher percentage of involving in peer group. (see more in Figure 3.1.17)

Proportion of men engaging in credit groups is relatively low compared to proportion of men engaging in other social group (only 4.7%). However, the proportion of rural men who engaged in credit group was double that of urban men although the percentage was relatively low for both rural and urban men (6.2% of rural men compared to 3.1% of urban

ones). Men of age group 30-39 consist of the highest proportion involving in credit groups (7.3%). Participation in financial/credit groups may reflect men and women accessibility to loan. These issues need further research to clarify whether related policy and strategies to financially supporting credit loan are appropriate as at present time, not only poor groups need support but also economically active and young age groups need support to access the loan/credit program for their economic development.

FIGURE 3.1.17. Proportion of men who are members of social groups



3.1.7.3. What men do when they meet their friends

Meeting with friends is always a key need of both men and women and this is a way an individual using to share, create and to maintain his/her social network.

When friends meet, firstly, we greet and ask each other's health and earning. If someone does well in business, he would give hand to other who is in need. Such is friendship. The more you have friends the easier your business/earning is, it is like you have more hand, or a tree has more roots.

(IDI, man 39 years old, Hoa Binh)

Close friends can share to your life experiences, can help you when you face financial difficulties. My relationship with friends affects me greatly as they help me a lot, especially in my business. My friends from other regions help me a great deal when I started my business, from how to start, how to make network with business partners. I have grown up and successful today thanks to my friends, they contribute about 40-50 % of my success.

(IDI, man, 29 years old, Hoa Binh)

However, meeting friends does not limit in sharing and chatting, they can also do other things together. One of the survey questions aims to explore what friends often do together when they meet, and among those what are the risk factors that may be harmful to their health, both physical and mental health, or risk of legal violation due to abuse of drinking, stimulants, gambling, or other law-prohibited activities.

Results of data in Table 3.1.18 shows that there are four most common activities that friends often do when they meet (with highest percentage of reported participants): drinking beer or alcohol (77%), smoking cigarettes/pipe tobacco (51.2%), going to karaoke or to bar/dancing club (28.2%) and play video games (10.7%). Other collective activities such as going to massage/spa services, gambling or betting, or using stimulants or motorbike racing, or watching adult videos, constituted a small percentage of below 5%. There were only 12.7% of the surveyed men who reported not doing the mentioned above activities when they are together with their friends. (see Table 3.1.18).

TABLE 3.1.18. Activities that men often do when meeting friends according to place of living, education level and age groups N = 2567

Activity	All	Activity	All
Drinking beer, alcohol	76.98	Going to massage, sauna	4.75
Smoking cigarettes, pipe tobacco, cigars	51.23	Gambling, betting	3.43
Using other stimulants	2.8	Racing	0.39
Playing video games	10.79	Watch adult movie/video	1.83
Karaoke / Bar/dancing	28.2	None of the activities above	12.27

The most common activity when the surveyed men met their friends was drinking beer or alcohol – up to 2/3 number of surveyed men report this fact. The results of the National Survey on alcohol consumption in Viet Nam in 2015 also indicated that 86.6% of men used beer/alcohol.¹²¹

Below is the share by men in a FGD:

...Man nowadays drink beer a lot, drink wine a lot, smoke a lot

(Male FGD, HCMC)

121 Lưu Bích Ngọc and Nguyễn Thị Thiêng, *Tiêu Dùng Rượu Bia ở Việt Nam: Một Số Kết Quả Điều Tra Quốc Gia (Alcohol Consumption in Viet Nam: Results of the National Survey)*, Viện Dân Số và Các Vấn Đề Xã Hội (Institute for Population and Social Issues) (NXB Đại học Kinh tế Quốc dân, 2015).

Drinking wine/beer seem to be a very common practice in various social gatherings and it becomes a kind of way to prove men's "communicating capacity". This may partly root from a traditional gendered norm about men's ability which is illustrated in a common proverb "a man without wine is like a flag without wind".



... each leader has his own habit.. you cannot drink only one glass of beer how can you carry your work. So do you drink it or not.. then you little by little it becomes habit. Like me, before I could not drink alcohol, now I can drink couples of beer bottle ...

(Male FGD, HCMC)

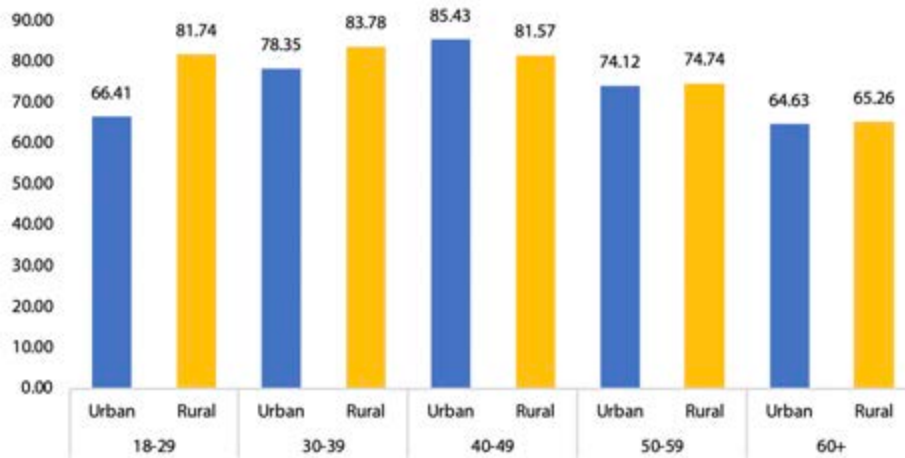


Now as to my observation in many offices, people drink wine/beer as a good way to start a talk.. The old saying "eating a betel nut initiates a communication, now drinking wine or beer is a start.

(Male FGD, HCMC)

Figure 3.1.18 indicates a significant difference between rural and urban men of young ages groups regarding drinking wine/beer when meeting their friends. Proportions of rural men of two younger age groups (18-29 and 30-39) who often drink alcohol in friend gathering is relatively higher compared to their counterparts in urban areas (81.74% compared to 66.41% regarding men of age group 18-29; and 83.78% compared to 78.35% regarding men of age group 30-39). In older age groups (50-59 and 60 and above), proportions of urban and rural men who drink alcohol in friend gatherings are similar. This finding may suggest an effort to promote the programs on alcohol prevention starting from young age people, especially young men living in rural areas. The recently policy enforcement to strictly fine drivers who drink alcohol during driving play a significant role in changing the alcohol drinking practice, especially among men.

FIGURE 3.1.18. **Proportion of men who drink alcohol in friend gathering by age group and place of living**



However, there are about one third of men who report that they do not drink alcohol in friend gathering, and about half of men who do not smoke (cigarettes, pipe tobacco, etc.). In such social communities where drinking alcohol or smoking are relatively common in social communication, the behaviour of Say No to alcohol and/or smoking by some men need to encourage and promote as a positive deviance practice. In addition, there are men who admit the situation of alcohol abuse in meetings/gatherings and agree that this abusive practice need to be prevented.

Some men drink too much. In some instance, drinking alcohol is a must but now people abuse it. We should control alcohol but should not let alcohol control us.

(IDI, man aged 40, Hoa Binh)

The government should provide policy and action against negative practice, drinking alcohol is the most negative one. For instance, if I would like to implement some business, it would not work if you do not go to restaurant to talk. I see like that in most of cases. Together going to restaurant to discuss, to negotiate. You should have partner or team in doing some work/business, and then you should bring the team to have some drink, all kind of things...

(Male FGD, HCMC)

Generally speaking, the survey data of men's engaging in both formal socio-political organization and informal social groups reflect men's opportunities to maintain and enhance

their relationship and communication with others, through those group engagements, their social capital and relationships can be strengthened and escalated, enabling their access to resources. Men's participation in various social organizations and groups in different age period indicate their active representation in social life.

A research paper attempts to analyse the management of social capitals using data from the national survey on rural households in 2008 indicates the relationship between participation in social groups and household's income.¹²² According to the analysis, the frequency of participation in socio-political organizations varies among income groups: the proportion of Party members is four times higher in the rich income group compared to that in poor groups. In this survey, analysing the relationship between men's social participation and their occupations and leadership/management could be necessary. However, the results of this section indicate the proportional relation between men's education and their social participation.

The high participation of young aged men in professional groups and hobby/interest groups could reflect young men's wider concern about non-traditional social network, and these are their opportunities to strengthen their social capital. In recent period, men and women also actively engaging in online social networks. The engagement of men in online social network is discussed in other part of this report.

However, while maintaining their social participation and networking through number of meetings and gatherings, there are a high proportion of men of different groups who are at the same time maintaining some practice that may be harmful to their health and the way of living, such as drinking alcohol, smoking, especially men of younger age groups. It is necessary to have deeper research on those harmful practice looking from the socio-cultural aspect in order to have better explanation to such practices among men; further promoting positive deviance behaviour; and to improve the policy framework and enforcement in order to change those harmful practices.

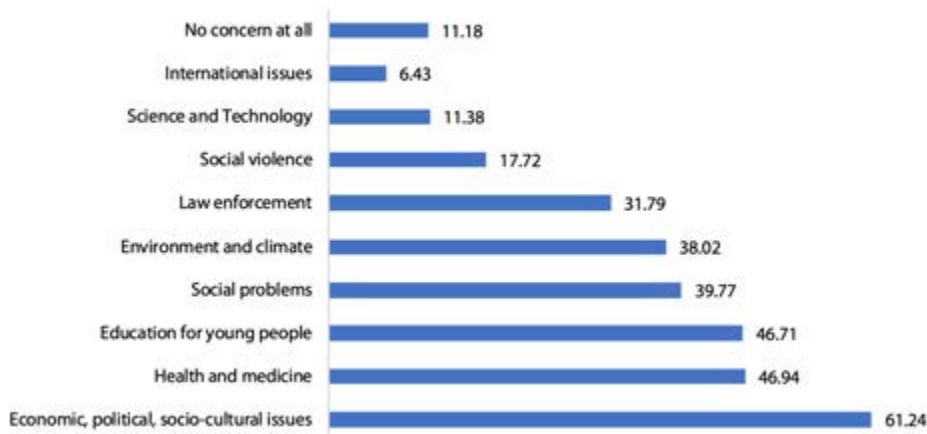
3.1.8. Hobbies and personal interests

In this section, the men participating in the study were asked about their hobbies, personal interests as well as their time spent on some personal activities such as learning new knowledge, playing sports and travelling.

Regarding social issues, according to Figure 3.1.19 below, Vietnamese men are most interested in the political - economic and cultural - social issues of the country, followed by the health and education issues for the younger generation (61.3%, 46.94% and 46.71%, respectively). However, just over 6% of men are concerned about international issues, which is particularly noticeable in the context of globalisation today. Besides, more than 11% of men shared that they do not really care about social issues.

122 Nguyễn Trung Kiên and Lê Ngọc Hùng, "Social Management Based on Participation: Some Theoretical and Practical Issues," *Sociological Review* No 1(117) (2012).

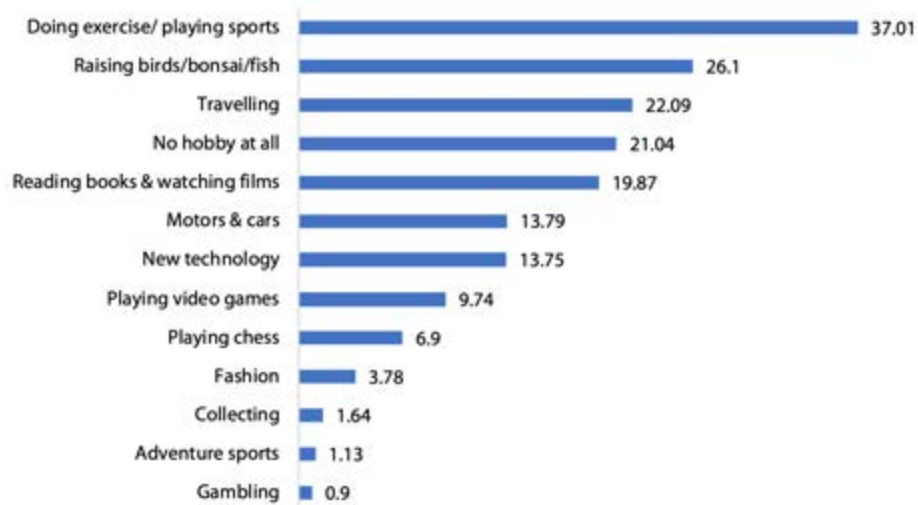
FIGURE 3.1.19. Rate of men interested in some social issues. N=2,567



When disaggregating the data by age group (as shown in Table A-4 in the Appendixes), we can see that the higher the male age group, the more attention is paid to economic - political issues, environment, climate change and law enforcement. Young people (18-29) pay more attention to social problems (drugs, gambling, etc.), social violence, science and technology and international issues. For example, with regard to social violence, 26.76% of male youth 18-29 are interested, while this proportions in the age groups 30-39, 40-49, 50-59 and 60+ are only 19.39%, 14.36%, 14.69% and 11.58%, respectively.

The younger group seems to be more open to globalisation, as well as more concerned with the social unrest that has occurred in recent years. 9.46% of young men 18-29 are interested in international affairs, while this proportion in the age groups 30-39, 40-49, 50-59 and 60+ is only 5.56%, 4.44%, 6.48% and 6.95% respectively. A lower proportion of young men 18-29 said that they do not really care about social issues compared to that of older men, reflecting the trend that younger men are more interested in social issues. It may also be because young people have more access to the Internet as well as diverse sources of information in today's era. When conducting significance tests, we found out that the differences are statistically significant across all the categories (p value < .05) except for the category of "social problems" (p value > .05).

The difference between men living in urban and rural areas is negligible in all the categories except for the "environment and climate change" and "social violence". Accordingly, more than 40% of the urban men are interested in the environmental issue while only around 36% of the rural men care about it. Meanwhile, about 15% of the urban men are concerned about social violence whereas up to 20% of the rural men paid attention to it. Statistics tests support these findings in the sense that urban men are more interested in the environmental issue and less interested in social violence than their rural counterparts.

FIGURE 3.1.20. **Personal interests of men. N=2,567**

We can see that exercising and sports are the most favourite things to do for men. More than one-third of the men involved in the study (37.01%) prefer to exercise, 1/4 love raising birds/ fish/bonsai (26.1%) and nearly a quarter like travelling (22.09%). This shows that Vietnamese men are quite interested in health training (although in the health section of the study, it can be seen that men do not regularly go to health check), and most have healthy interests.

The data presented in the Figure A-1 in the Appendixes details on men's interests by area (urban and rural). In general, the proportion of the urban males with these interests is higher than that of rural males, except for the hobby of raising birds/fish/bonsai. For example, 39.75% of the urban males prefer physical exercise while only 34.33% of rural males prefer to do this. The proportion of the urban men who prefer to play video games is nearly double that in rural areas (12.15% and 7.39%). The urban men's new technology interest is also relatively higher than that of the rural men (16.25% and 11.32%). This can be explained by the fact that technology, computers and electronic entertainment devices are more common in urban areas than in rural areas.

Table A-5 in the Appendixes describes men's personal interests by age group. Hobbies like exercise, sports, new technology, cars, playing video games, fashion and travelling are the most common among the 18-29 age group, while raising birds/fish/bonsai and playing chess are more common among older age groups. For example, with new technology hobby, up to 26.16% of young people 18-29 years old have this hobby, while for the age group 30-39, 40-49, 50-59 and 60+, the proportions respectively just reach 16.02%, 10.77%, 7.42% and 6.95%. In addition, reading is fairly common among all age groups.

At the time of the study, two-thirds of the interviewed men used the Internet (including Internet access on phones and computers), of which the majority (nearly 90%) used the Internet

at least an hour a day. Men use the Internet mostly to update news (61.5%), entertainments like watching movies, listening to music and playing video games (51.5%), and accessing social networks such as Facebook and Zalo (47.8%). There is not much difference between urban and rural men. However, the results of Table 3.2.31 below show that while the elderly group often use the Internet to update current news and learn socio-cultural information, the younger group often uses the Internet to access social network, have fun and chat with friends. For example, only 39.41% of 18-29 men use the Internet to update news while the proportions in the age groups 30-39, 40-49, 50-59 and 60+ are respectively 62.14%, 71.3%, 77.62% and 85.15%. See Table A-6 in the Appendixes for more details)

A number of qualitative interviews with men in the study showed that the use of the Internet and social networks positively affect men's life as well as their perceptions of gender equality. According to them, the development of the Internet and especially social networks contribute to the propagation of messages about gender equality, the role of women and men in today's society as well as opening up new opportunities for both women and men.



I'm thinking of ads involving men and women. Such as an ad of razor that I just happened to see on YouTube last time. In that ad, they mentioned "How to be a man". The ad includes some scenes where women were whistled, slapped, or bullied by men. And then, at the end of the ad, they said what men should do to be a real man, and then finally they showed the razor. After watching the ad, I found that it had a lot of value about gender study. I think advertising can affect the way men think about gender roles. People can integrate gender equality messages into the daily advertisements.

IDI, male 23 years old, Hanoi



I see that in the 4.0 era, the Internet creates more opportunities for both men and women, such as employment and networking opportunities. The Internet also makes people more active and gain more knowledge. They can sit at home and know a lot of things in the world, because all pieces of news can now be found on the Internet.

IDI, male, 28 years old, Hanoi

3.2. Gender Socialization

3.2.1. Gender socialization before the age of 18

In this section, the study explores experiences of Vietnamese men before the age of 18 related to gender bias as well as the effects of status relations and gender power on family life and Vietnamese men's experiences before the age of 18.

3.2.1.1. Exposure to gendered perceptions before the age of 18

Table 3.2.1 describes gender norms that the participants often heard before they are 18 years old. 60% of participants before the age of 18 often heard: "Men are responsible for ancestor worship / lineage." The concepts such as "Men should be breadwinner", "Men must be the supporters of their parents", "Men must be strong, not weak" were also frequently heard, with 57%, 49%, 47 % respectively. Among the five perceptions, the concept "Men must have high status in society" was less heard than the others, but it was also quite common with 34% of men often hearing that perception.

Similar to the concept of stereotypes/gender bias against women, before 18 years old, the participants used to hear some stereotypes of women. The most common concept was "Women must take care of the family and engage in housework (54.62%)". Other common ones were "The vocation of women is to be a wife and a mother" (53.14%), "Women must be gentle and listen to their husbands" (45.90%). The concept "Women with higher education is difficult to get married" was heard at the lowest frequency (16.84%).

TABLE 3.2.1. **The proportion of men exposed to perceptions of gender bias before the age of 18. N = 2567**

Perceptions of gender bias often heard by Vietnamese men before the age of 18	Never	Sometimes	Often
About men			
Men must be strong, not weak	18.68	34.76	46.56
Men must be the breadwinner of the family	9.5	33.54	56.96
Men must be the supporters of their parents	17.90	33.46	48.63
Men are responsible for ancestor worship/lineage	9.3	29.91	60.79
Men must have high status in society"	27.50	38.13	34.37
About women			
Women must be gentle and listen to their husbands	16.33	37.77	45.90
Women with higher education is difficult to get married	50.45	32.70	16.84
Women must take care of the family and engage in housework	9.37	36.01	54.62
The vocation of women is to be a wife and a mother	12.16	34.71	53.14

This result was also found in qualitative research:



My father always told me that in the future, when I went to find a wife from the countryside, I should go down to her kitchen and toilet to check whether they were clean or not. My father also taught my sister like that. A good woman should be a good housewife first and then should love her husband and children, and then have a good job.

Man, 43 years old, Ha Noi

Vietnamese men are often taught by their parents about men's role and women's role in the family:



My father taught me that the husband must be the breadwinner in the family. My parents also told me to try to be strong and tough, not to be weak."

Man, 35 years old, Ha Noi.



Women must grow up to have a family and to follow their husbands. They should know what a female should be like when they live with her husband and her husband's parents. Women should love her husband's family, then they have to do the housework well."

Man, 32 years old, Khanh Hoa.

The analysis of the correlation between the age and exposure to gender stereotypes shows that there is no relationship between the age of men and the regular access to gender stereotypes about men (Spearman's coefficient) $\rho=.03$; $p=.91$). However, the higher the age of men, the more often they were exposed to gender stereotypes about women (Spearman's $\rho=.10$; $p=.00$).

As such, Vietnamese men often hear the concepts of gender bias at an early age, which can affect the unconscious conceptualization of gender bias in their later adulthood.

3.2.1.2. Participation in housework before the age of 18

The proportion of the participants never engaging in housework before the age of 18 was quite high, especially in housework such as shopping/cooking, looking after/caring for the family, repairing houses/ furniture (at 37.93%, 32.55% and 30.49%, respectively) (Table 3.2.2). When we compare between urban and rural areas, it can be seen that the rate of men never taking part

in housework before they were 18 was higher in urban areas than in rural areas. The percentage of the participants who never participated in production activities with their families in urban areas was higher than in rural areas because in rural areas, families have more production activities than urban areas. Similarly, the rate of regular participation in all household chores of men living in rural areas at a young age was higher than that of males living in urban areas. The findings of our research are similar to the results of the Vietnam Family Survey in 2006 in the sense that the percentage of children involved in household chores in rural areas was higher than in urban areas.¹²³ The rate of the respondents regularly participating in housework was around 30-45%.

Thus, the proportion of the respondents who never did household chores at their early age was quite high, and the participation of men in urban areas in housework was lower than that of men in rural areas.

TABLE 3.2.2. The proportion of men doing housework before the age of 18. N= 2,567

	Urban			Rural		
	Never	Sometimes	Often	Never	Sometimes	Often
Shopping/cooking	37.93	31.44	30.64	31.95	28.33	39.73
Doing dishng/ laundry	27.79	34.85	37.36	20.01	34.09	45.9
Cleaning the house	21.53	38.72	39.45	15.62	37.83	46.56
Repairing the house/ furniture	30.49	40.84	28.67	28.5	40.19	31.21
Looking after/ taking care of the family	32.55	35.14	32.31	29.08	34.93	35.99
Participating in family production activities	32.83	26.54	40.63	12.42	24.46	63.13

Meanwhile, the regression analysis shows that even when controlling for the socio-economic status, the participation in housework (cooking, washing, house cleaning, furniture repair, caring for the family, family production activities) of men before the age of 18 predicts the participation in housework in adulthood of men (Coefficient = .08; p <.001) (Table 3.2.3).

123 General Statistics Office. Vietnam Family Survey Results (2006).

TABLE 3.2.3. **Regression results of finding the relationship between participation in housework of men before the age of 18 and in adulthood**

Variables	R squared= .06	
	Co-efficient	p-value
Age	-.02	.00*
Urban (vs. rural)	-.03	.80
Ethnicity	.05	.75
Education	.24	.00*
Average monthly income	-.21	.00*
Participation in housework before the age of 18	.08	.00*

* p<0.05

The qualitative research also shows that doing housework since childhood will affect their habits in adulthood.

Doing laundry is something that my parents taught me during my childhood. When I was young, I used to wash clothes including underwear of my mother's and my sister's. At that time, the common idea was that men must not have touched things like that. Now I feel free to do laundry for my own family.

Man, 53 years old, Hoa Binh

I have been involved in housework since I was a junior high school student. Back then, I used to do things like washing dishes, sweeping the house and putting clothes into the washing machine. I think that is why I have a habit of doing housework voluntarily later on, and that also contributes to making me actively share housework with my wife.

Man, 28 years old, Ha Noi.

As such, male participation in housework may contribute to promoting positive gender perceptions about the division of work by gender.

3.2.1.3. Observation of the division of housework before the age of 18

To find out how Vietnamese men grew up in a family with a model of property ownership and division of labor, we asked the surveyed men who was the person who owned the property and who did which jobs in their family before they reached the age of 18. Table 3.2.4 shows that the model of property ownership and traditional labor division is very clear. The percentage of men whose fathers owned property, represented family to communicate with the government and the

community and participated in kindship affairs is much higher than that of men whose mothers did those things. This result is consistent with the Vietnam Family Survey 2006 which found out that most properties were owned by men in the family. The gap between the proportion of men and women owning assets, representing the family to communicate with the government and the community and participating in kindship affairs in rural areas is larger than that in urban areas. The rate of men seeing that both father and mother did those jobs together in rural areas is similar to that in urban areas (around 20-30%).

TABLE 3.2.4. **Observation of household labour division before the age of 18 by area. N=2,567**

	Urban			Rural		
	Mother	Father	Both	Mother	Father	Both
Important property ownership	23.16	50.54	26.3	16.38	56.18	27.43
Communication with the government and the community on behalf of the family	26.97	51.94	21.08	19.23	60.07	20.7
Communication and participation in clan work	20.7	48.07	31.23	15.51	54.2	30.29
Housework	69.03	4.52	26.45	59.48	7.31	33.21
Taking care of children	62.51	3.23	34.26	53.12	4.48	42.41
Taking care of the sick and elderly	56.01	3.89	40.1	47.46	5.21	47.33
Doing income-generating work	12.41	22.39	65.2	12.51	18.07	69.43

As shown in the table 3.2.4, most surveyed men before the age of 18 witnessed that women were primarily responsible for housework, childcare and care for the sick and the elderly and rural men shared these tasks more than urban men. The proportion of men seeing that both father and mother did housework, cared for children, the sick and the elderly in rural areas is also higher than that in urban areas. Besides, in most households, both in rural and urban areas, men and women were engaged in earning income (65% in urban and 69% in rural areas).

3.2.1.4. Observations of the decision-making roles in the family before age 18

Approximately 40% of the surveyed men said that before they were 18, their fathers had the decisive voice for large family spending and investment and more than 30% said that both parents decided on those matters. The percentage of only mothers making a decision is only about 25% (Table 3.2.5). The gap in the rates of fathers and mothers deciding on large family spending and investment in rural areas is larger than that in urban areas.

However, the majority of the surveyed men saw that their mothers mainly decided on family daily expenses (75-78%).

Regarding health care, education, employment and marriage of children, both parents tended to make decision together (50-65%). The proportion of men witnessing that both parents made decision in rural areas tends to be higher than that in urban areas.

TABLE 3.2.5. **Observation of the decision-making roles in the family among men before age 18. N=2,567**

	Urban			Rural		
	Mother	Father	Both	Mother	Father	Both
Large expenses and investments	29.38	38.9	31.73	23.75	40.94	35.31
Mediation	38.74	13.47	47.79	33.1	16.46	50.44
Education of children	31.32	16.15	52.53	28.33	15.39	56.28
Employment of children	27.64	17.89	54.47	23.22	17.15	59.63
Marriage of children	22.86	12.39	64.75	20.13	14.05	65.82
Labour division in the family	26.37	14.52	59.11	23.73	19.77	56.5
Daily expenses	78.31	7.08	14.62	74.68	9.67	15.65

From an early age, many interviewed men used to observe or hear that housework was women's job.



My father did all the hard work, except for cooking. My father stated that cooking, washing clothes, sweeping the house and taking care of children were women's jobs.

Man, 37 years old, Hoa Binh.

Although the concept of housework being held by women persists, it is not the only model existing nowadays. Younger generations tend to have different thoughts and practices.



When I became an adult and entered this modern society, my opinion about gender roles became different. At home, my wife and I decide on everything together. Our current contributions to the family are equal, including income, so both of us discuss all issues and make decision together.

Man, 28 years old, Ha Noi.

As in our family, we have always been equal. It may also be because my family pattern is different from the pattern of others' families. When I look at my family, my parents are equal, and my wife and I are also equal. I don't see too much difference between the two generations.

Man, 28 years old, Hanoi.

This result is quite consistent with the results of the 2006 Vietnam Family Survey and the 2015 study of Social Determinants of Gender Inequality in Vietnam by ISDS. In all three studies, men were always the ones who decided on important expenses, while women decided on daily expenses. However, this study and the two studies mentioned above have found a shift in the decision model. The positive trends in the decision-making process have been noted in some families, and positive movements can also be seen across generations. The younger the male, the more likely he is to observe that both of their parents were involved in the decision-making process. For example, in the two youngest age groups (18-29 and 30-39 years old), the percentages of men witnessing that both parents made decision on family issues together are 61.6% and 61.4% respectively, while the rates in group 40-49, 50-59 and over 60 are respectively 58.6%, 51.9% and 51.1%.

3.2.1.5. Experience of violence before the age of 18

The percentage of the participants who before the age of 18 knew the cases that men sometimes/often beat or committed violence against women or verbally abuse women is very high (over 70%) (Table 3.2.6). Meanwhile, the rate of men who knew cases that women had violence against men is 30% and the rate of men who knew cases that women verbally abused men is about 50%. There is no significant difference in these rates when we compare urban and rural areas.

Nearly 90% of the surveyed men before age 18 observed that men sometimes/often used alcohol/drugs in both urban and rural areas and about 50% observed this phenomenon among women. The surveyed men before the age of 18 also observed that men committed adultery, or scolded or neglected their children more often than women.

The rate of the participants who, in childhood, witnessed that boys were favored over girls by fathers was higher than the rate of men who observed that boys were favored over girls by mothers in their childhoods. The rate of men before the age of 18 witnessed that boys were favored over girls was higher in urban areas than in rural areas. The rate of men before the age of 18 observed that men/women favor girls over boys was lower than that of men/women who favored boys over girls. The observation of girl preference was higher in urban areas than in rural areas, though still lower than preference for boys.

The concept of “respect for men and disrespect for women” manifested in the conduct of daily life is also found in our qualitative research. A 47-year-old man in Ho Chi Minh shared his own experience of being favored because of being a son in his family:

At that moment, as a son, I was more favored by my parents and I really enjoyed it. But at that time, I was still young. I just received the ideas and perceptions that my parents passed on and then I just accepted them absolutely. My parents, aunts and uncles keep on propagating such ideas. They believed that without having a son, a family could not do anything. Boys must be prioritized in every case. The first reason is that sons are responsible for the lineage. The second reason is that sons are in charge of managing the house. The daughter must follow her husband and that's done.

Man, 47 years old, Ho Chi Minh city.

Younger people still have the same experience:

Among all the three children in the family, I am the one most prioritized because I am a son who is the youngest in the family. For example, after having lunch or dinner, I don't have to clean and do the dishes. I also get the highest education in the family as my sisters only finished the 7th grade.

Man, 33 years old, Ha Noi.

Our research findings are similar to the results of the 2006 Vietnam Family Survey¹²⁴ in that many parents believe that boys need to be preferred over girls in order to continue their lineage, have someone to support them at their old age, have someone to do big jobs in the family, and have someone to inherit their property.

TABLE 3.2.6. **Violence witnessing among men before the age of 18 (%). N=2,567**

	Urban			Rural		
	Never	Sometimes	Often	Never	Sometimes	Often
Knowing about men beating or having violent behaviour against women	29.66	48.39	21.95	27.61	53.13	19.26
Knowing about women beating or having violent behaviour against men	65.29	30.93	3.78	68.37	29.55	2.08
Knowing about men verbally abusing women	25.66	50.29	24.05	24.24	54.91	20.85
Knowing about women verbally abusing men	45.82	42.73	11.45	45.48	47.08	7.43
Knowing about men beating, scolding or neglecting children	36.61	45.42	17.96	35.6	51.61	12.8
Knowing about women beating, scolding or neglecting children	49.94	42.69	7.36	51.67	43.14	5.19
Knowing about men using alcohol/drugs	10.6	29.53	59.86	10.99	35.93	53.09
Knowing about women using alcohol/drugs	49.54	43.12	7.34	51.16	43.9	4.94
Knowing about men committing adultery	41.41	44.94	13.65	42.29	48.37	9.34
Knowing about women committing adultery	48.47	43.9	7.63	49.25	46.65	4.1
Knowing about men preferring sons to daughters	44.91	36.69	18.4	48.47	36.58	14.95
Knowing about women preferring sons to daughters	60.09	31.21	8.7	63.02	31.51	5.47
Knowing about men preferring daughters to sons	66.59	27.12	6.29	70.52	26.11	3.37
Knowing about women preferring daughters to sons	71.43	24.39	4.18	74.92	23.09	1.98

The analysis of the correlation between the age and the frequency of men witnessing violent acts conducted by men and women shows that the older the man, the less likely he is to witness violent acts conducted by both men and women (violent acts of men: Spearman's coefficient $\rho = -1.10$; $p = .00$; violent acts of women: Spearman's coefficient $\rho = -.07$; $p = .00$). The explanation for this result may be due to memory errors: older men may gradually forget the experiences of violence in childhood. Besides, the situation of violence may be increasing. More research is needed to clarify this trend.

Although boys tend to be more biased than girls in the family, more than 70% of the surveyed men were sometimes/often scolded or beaten by their parents, siblings or family members (Table 3.2.7). This rate is similar to the result of a study of emotional abuse, which showed that 81.7% of children were verbally abused or beaten by family members. The rate of the participants who were regularly beaten or verbally abused by family members before the age of 18 in urban areas is 11.5% and the rate in rural areas is 8.91%. The rate of the participants occasionally bullied or scolded by someone outside the family before the age of 18 is quite high at more than 40%, but still lower than the rate of the participants exposed to violence by their family members.

About a quarter of urban men and less than one in five rural men reported occasional/regular access to pornography (movies, photos, stories) before the age of 18.

The rate of the participants who bullied others, left home, and played truant before the age of 18 was higher in urban areas than in rural areas. The rates of boys playing truant (more than 40%) and leaving home (more than 10%) before the age of 18 in this study were higher than the results shown in the 2006 Vietnam Family Survey¹²⁵. In that survey, 15.2% of adolescent boys had run away from school and 1.8% went out without permission. The drop-out rate of male adolescents in rural areas was higher than in urban areas. The difference was likely due to the fact that in our study, the percentages were based on the results of the self-reports by the men who participated in the research, while in the Vietnam Family Survey, the rate of truancy and leaving home without permission was subject to parents reporting about their children. Some young men might skip school or hang out overnight without their parents knowing about it. That may be the cause for this difference.

125 General Statistics Office. Vietnam Family Survey Results (2006).

TABLE 3.2.7. **Violence experiences among Vietnamese men before the age of 18(%, N=2,567**

	Urban			Rural		
	Never	Sometimes	Often	Never	Sometimes	Often
Beaten or verbally abused by parents/ siblings/ relatives	23.58	64.92	11.5	25.19	65.89	8.91
Bullied/ scolded by people outside the family	56.54	40.05	3.41	53.45	43.58	2.97
Bullying others	64.96	31.51	3.53	68.94	29.1	1.96
Leaving home	81.78	16.74	1.48	87.65	11.34	1.01
Truancy/drop-out	51.55	42.96	5.5	55.78	39.87	4.35
Accessing black films/ black books	74.83	23.23	1.94	84.52	14.94	0.54

The analysis of the correlation between the age and violence experience of men before 18 years old shows that the older the man, the less likely he was to experience (Spearman's rho = -.27; p = .00). Similar to the previous analysis, memory errors can affect this result as older men may forget about their violence experiences in childhood. More research is needed to clarify this trend.

In summary, Vietnamese men before the age of 18 used to access gender stereotypes through education of their parents and relatives, by observing parents' division of work and decision-making process on family affairs. These approaches can directly affect the formation of gender concepts by Vietnamese men as adults. However, not all men have the same experience. Some people grew up in the family that has a more equal relationship, with parents sharing family chores and making important decisions together. A positive shift in gender perceptions will continue as these individuals enter adulthood.



In my opinion, men were the ones who made a lot of money in the old days and succeeded in their field work. For now, there must be reconciliation between the family and work. Men should not only be successful in their work but also have time to take care of his wife and children, know how to do housework and be aware of equality between wife and husband. The biggest difference is probably the responsibility of sharing all the family work with his wife, including not only housework, but also things like the right to make decisions and property ownership.

Man, 28 years old, Ha Noi

3.2.2. Gender practices in current family

This section present findings of men in their current life such as labour division, decision-making, property ownership and intimate relationships.

3.2.2.1. Labour division in the family

The traditional gender labour division when - “men are responsible for outside matters and women are responsible for inside,” is still quite common. The results in Table 3.2.8 below show that daily domestic tasks such as cooking, washing and cleaning the house are mainly undertaken by women, with the ratios of 61.49%, 62.33% and 57.65%, respectively. In contrast, the husband is primarily responsible for “external” affairs such as representing the family to communicate with the government and the community (69.49%) and participating in kinship activities (65.04%). In addition, the most common thing that both husband and wife do is earning income for the family (72.06%).

TABLE 3.2.8. **Rate of husband/wife doing household activities, N=2,137**

Household work	Mainly wife does	Mainly husband does	Both do	None does	Total
Cooking	61.49	8.24	27.75	2.52	100
Laundry	62.33	6.93	27.47	3.27	100
Home cleaning	57.65	7.39	32.71	2.25	100
Representing family to communicate with authorities and communities*	10.29	69.49	16.38	3.84	100
Participating in kinship activities**	3.88	65.04	27.8	3.28	100
Fixing things in the house	11.98	66.17	17.64	4.21	100
Earning income	5.24	20.45	72.06	2.25	100
Taking care of children	28.36	5.85	59.94	5.85	100
Taking care of sick/old people	23.21	7.77	60.74	8.28	100
Using contraception	28.45	9.69	40.95	20.91	100

*Some administrative papers (such as making birth certificates, death certificates, land use rights and notarization of documents) and meeting the neighbourhood group.

**Some jobs in the the extended family, including grandparents, uncles, cousins, ...) like attending or helping organizing funerals, death anniversaries, weddings, longevity ceremonies, renovating graves, ... For the organization of funerals, anniversaries, weddings or celebrations, although women also get involved in jobs such as cooking, cleaning, men are still the ones who make the main decisions such as the date and time, how to organize, ... Things like renovating graves are entirely decided by men in the extended family.

However, there is a positive change in the division of family labour among young men. The results in Table 3.2.9 below show that the younger the men are, the more likely they are to share housework with their women, and the urban youth are more likely to share housework with their wives than rural youth.

TABLE 3.2.9. **Rate of husband/wife doing household activities by age group and area (% column)**

	Urban					Rural					
	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	
Cooking	Mainly wife does	49.25	58.45	64.05	60.67	67.7	63.04	55.21	60.12	68.73	64.89
	Mainly husband does	5.97	6.85	9.09	9.45	4.97	5.43	9.46	8.9	7.56	10.64
	Both do	38.81	30.14	24.38	28.66	25.47	27.17	33.44	28.83	21.65	20.21
	None does	5.97	4.57	2.48	1.22	1.86	4.35	1.89	2.15	2.06	4.26
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Laundry	Mainly wife does	52.24	59.36	62.81	62.5	66.46	64.13	54.89	63.5	69.76	63.83
	Mainly husband does	2.99	5.94	7.44	7.62	6.83	1.09	8.52	7.36	6.19	9.57
	Both do	40.3	32.88	25.62	27.44	24.22	29.35	33.75	25.77	21.31	18.09
	None does	4.48	1.83	4.13	2.44	2.48	5.43	2.84	3.37	2.75	8.51
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Home cleaning	Mainly wife does	43.28	53.42	57.02	58.54	59.63	61.96	54.26	57.67	64.6	58.51
	Mainly husband does	5.97	6.85	7.85	8.23	6.83	1.09	7.57	7.98	7.56	9.57
	Both do	49.25	36.99	33.06	32.01	30.43	32.61	36.59	31.9	26.12	26.6
	None does	1.49	2.74	2.07	1.22	3.11	4.35	1.58	2.45	1.72	5.32
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>N</i>	67	219	242	328	161	92	317	326	291	94	

For example, for cooking, 38.81% of 18-29-year-old men in urban areas cook with their wives, while only 27.17% of this age group in rural areas do this. As age increases, these proportions in both rural and urban areas tend to decrease. For instance, in the age group 50-59, the proportion of the urban men who share cooking with their wives is 28.66% while in rural areas it is 21.65%.

The qualitative analysis also shows that the younger group are more open to housework than men in the older age groups. Many young people said in the in-depth interviews that cooking, washing and cleaning the house are the normal jobs that adults need to do to take care of themselves as well as their family members. They are aware that women also go out to work to earn income like men, so they are willing to do housework and look after children.

➤ *Actually, in my family there is no clear division in term of who has to do what. If anyone goes home from work first, that person will cook. The washing machine takes care of the laundry so I just need to put clothes into the washing machine and then dry; so, it is not hard. For cleaning the house, both of us do. If my wife goes home from work late, I take the initiative to do everything.*

IDI, male, 28 years old, Ha Noi

➤ *Without a wife, I still had to cook, because I have been independent of my parents since I was 18 years old. When I have a wife, I just need to cook more. Nothing changes.*

(IDI, male, 23 years old, Ha Noi)

Domestic work is something essential that all family members need to know. My husband and I sometimes have a headache about our children growing up while we are getting old. Sometimes my husband and I are upset but we always share with each other. If I haven't finished any work yet, my husband can help me do it. If my husband is not done yet, I can help him if I can.

FGD, female, 41 years old, Hoa Binh.

Meanwhile, men in the older age groups still believe that that housework is for women and men must be the breadwinner in the family.

The man must be the breadwinner in the family. I take care of any work, such as taking care of family and relatives' affairs. Relatives' affairs are like helping around in funerals and weddings.

IDI, male, 40 years old, Ha Noi

There are very few men who help their wives with housework. They have more "external" concerns than their wives and children at home. They like to hang out and drink. After working, they drink with their friends instead of going home with their wives and children... Vietnamese men are influenced by the feudal culture so they think that helping their wives means being fearful of her (sợ vợ). When other people think they are fearful of their wives, they feel ashamed.

FGD, female, 64 years old, Ho Chi Minh city

My mother is the homemaker. I can see that women are usually housewives in the family. Back then, my father used to work as a farmer and do social work. He was busy all day and there was almost no time at home. Most of housework is done by my mother.

IDI, male, 35 years old, Ha Noi

3.2.2.2. Decision-making in the family

As shown in Table 3.2.10, although the percentage of both husband and wife making decision on the family's large spending and investments is nearly 50%, the percentage of husbands who have a final say in these matters is four times higher than the percentage of wives who have the same power (38.28% vs. 9.73%). For daily expenses in the family, the wife plays a decisive role with the rate of up to 72.72%. The percentage of husband and wife making decision together

is quite high for things such as health care, education, employment and marriage of children (63.17%, 61.58%, 47.08% and 48.34%, respectively).

TABLE 3.2.10. **Rate of husband/wife making decision in the family, (%), N=2,137**

	Mainly wife does	Mainly husband does	Both do	None does	Total
Large spending and investments	9.73	38.28	49.13	2.86	100
Daily expenses	72.72	8.19	17.41	1.68	100
Healthcare and treatments	20.87	13.2	63.17	2.76	100
Children's education	16.19	12.21	61.58	10.02	100
Children's employment	8.28	9.45	47.08	35.19	100
Children's marriage	3.84	7.11	48.34	40.71	100

Table 3.2.11 below describes in detail the proportion of husband and wife making decisions on large spending and investments and daily expenses in the family by age group and area (urban and rural). In general, young people aged 18-29 tend to make more decisions with their wives than men in higher age groups. The proportion of both husband and wife making decision together in urban areas is also higher than in rural areas. For example, for large spending and investment, 53.73% of 18-29-year-old men in urban areas make decision with their wives, while this rate for rural youth is 36.96%. For daily household spending, 34.33% of 18-29-year-old men decide with their wives, while this rate for rural youth is 22.83%.

TABLE 3.2.11. **Rate of husband/wife making decision in the family by age group and area (% column)**

	Urban					Rural					
	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	
Large spending and investments	Mainly wife does	1.49	10.05	6.2	12.2	10.56	9.78	7.26	11.35	12.03	9.57
	Mainly husband does	34.33	35.16	38.02	36.89	41.61	43.48	38.17	37.42	40.55	39.36
	Both do	53.73	52.05	52.48	49.09	45.34	36.96	49.84	50.31	47.08	48.94
	None does	10.45	2.74	3.31	1.83	2.48	9.78	4.73	0.92	0.34	2.13
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Daily expenses	Mainly wife does	58.21	65.3	79.34	73.78	81.37	57.61	68.45	77.3	75.95	68.09
	Mainly husband does	4.48	8.68	6.2	7.32	4.97	11.96	8.2	8.9	9.97	11.7
	Both do	34.33	22.37	13.22	17.99	11.18	22.83	21.14	13.8	13.75	19.15
	None does	2.99	3.65	1.24	0.91	2.48	7.61	2.21	0	0.34	1.06
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	67	219	242	328	161	92	317	326	291	94	

The results of the interviews and group discussions with men and women at the survey sites provide more details on the shift toward more equal decision making among young generation. While men in the older groups often said that although they discussed with their wives for some cases, in most important cases, they were the main decision maker because they are the family's pillar, young men say they discuss with their wife on most family matters and decide together.

The husband is the person with the highest position in the family. The reason is because the husband makes money to take care of their wives and children. Being a husband means being proactive in life.

IDI, male, 59 years old, Khanh Hoa.

Big decisions in the family like building a house, marriage of children and buying big things are decided by me. For building the house, for example, it is not good for women to buy cement and steel. [If your wife is more knowledgeable, is it okay for her to go to buy it?] It's okay but she has to follow my opinion... Sometimes, social affairs are decided by me while internal affairs are settled down by my wife.

IDI, male, 58 years old, Khanh Hoa

[Does your wife have the right to do anything without asking your opinion?] Yes, there are things in the scope of women such as buying pigs, ducks and chickens. For example, she's responsible for going to the market, cooking and raising chickens, ducks, pigs and cows. I'm responsible for outside work and external relations and also fixing things in the house.

IDI, male, 63 years old, Khanh Hoa

My mother is only a housewife and looks after the store. My father decides everything in the family, even including which school I should go to and what I should eat.

IDI, male, 41 years old, Ha Noi.

Young men say they are open to discuss all family decisions with their wives.

If it's daily expenses, then my wife and I set a monthly budget and we just spend money within that budget. For large investments, we often discuss it with my wife and then we decide together. We often create an excel sheet to see how the costs and benefits of that investment look like. My wife is also good at calculating those things. For the issue that is too difficult, we consult our parents and friends. I think everything needs a mutual agreement so that both of us feel happy. I think that having a quarrel over money is not worth it.

IDI, male, 28 years old, Ha Noi

3.2.2.3. Property ownership

The results of the survey show that the proportion of men owning valuable household assets is many times higher than that of women. Table 3.2.12 below shows that the proportion of only husbands owning real estate is nearly 7 times higher than that of only wives (28.17% compared to 4.45%), although the proportion of men sharing ownership of real estate property with their wives account for 30%. Similarly, the proportion of only husbands owning large assets such as car, production/business facilities and means of valuable production, is several times higher than that of only owned by the wife. Among these assets, only savings book or bank account valued at over VND 5 million shows a slightly higher percentage of wife ownership than that of husband ownership (9.5% compared to 8.14%).

TABLE 3.2.12. **Rate of husband/wife owning property in the family, N=2,137**

	None owns	Only husband	Only wife	Separate ownership	Joint ownership	Total
Real estate	35.31	28.17	4.45	1.97	30.0	100
Savings book/bank account from 5 million VND	60.6	8.14	9.5	5.66	16.1	100
Stock, bond, valuable documents	89.24	2.81	1.54	0.75	5.66	100
Production/business facilities	82.26	6.88	2.34	0.56	7.96	100
Valuable production means	87.64	4.96	0.47	0.61	6.32	100
Car	92.98	3.7	0.42	0.42	2.48	100
Motorbike	7.2	23.87	4.87	47.12	16.94	100

This result is similar to findings from other studies on gender and family in Vietnam in recent times and contributes to affirming gender inequalities in property ownership and production resources. According to the *Social Determinants of Gender Inequality in Vietnam: ISDS's 2012-2015 study results*, 52.78% of men own real estate compared to 21.29% of women. Table 3.2.13 below describes in detail the proportion of husbands/wives/both owning family assets by age group and area.

TABLE 3.2.13. Rate of husband/wife owning property in the family by age group and area

	Urban					Rural					
	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	
Real estate	None owns	80.6	56.16	32.23	26.22	24.84	66.3	45.74	30.06	19.59	15.96
	Only husband owns	5.97	16.44	28.1	28.05	24.22	23.91	27.13	35.28	35.74	38.3
	Only wife owns	4.48	2.74	2.89	7.01	6.83	0	2.52	5.21	4.81	6.38
	Separate ownership	1.49	0.91	3.72	2.74	2.48	0	1.58	0.31	3.09	2.13
	Joint ownership	7.46	23.74	33.06	33.98	41.61	9.78	23.03	29.14	36.77	37.23
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Savings book/bank account from 5 million VND	None owns	71.64	48.86	50.83	53.96	48.45	73.91	66.56	67.79	65.98	74.47
	Only husband owns	7.46	10.05	7.02	8.23	9.32	7.61	7.57	7.36	8.25	9.57
	Only wife owns	7.46	10.5	13.22	10.06	13.66	4.35	8.52	8.59	7.56	7.45
	Separate ownership	4.48	10.05	7.44	6.71	7.45	4.35	4.73	3.07	4.12	3.19
	Joint ownership	8.96	20.55	21.49	21.04	21.12	9.78	12.62	13.19	14.09	5.32
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Production/business facilities	None owns	94.03	74.43	78.93	78.66	85.71	90.22	83.91	82.21	82.13	94.68
	Only husband owns	2.99	13.7	8.26	5.49	3.73	3.26	7.89	8.59	4.47	2.13
	Only wife owns	1.49	2.74	3.72	5.18	1.86	0	1.26	1.53	1.72	0
	Separate ownership	0	0	1.65	0.3	0	0	0.63	0	1.72	0
	Joint ownership	1.49	9.13	7.44	10.37	8.7	6.52	6.31	7.67	9.97	3.19
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Valuable production means	None owns	98.31	84.93	86.36	88.41	94.41	91.3	87.38	83.74	85.57	92.55
	Only husband owns	0	7.31	4.96	2.44	1.24	5.43	6.62	7.67	5.15	2.13
	Only wife owns	0	0	0.41	1.52	0	0	0.32	0	0.69	1.06
	Separate ownership	0	0.46	1.24	0.3	0	0	0.32	1.23	1.03	0
	Joint ownership	1.49	7.31	7.02	7.32	4.35	3.26	5.36	7.36	7.56	4.26
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	67	219	242	328	161	92	317	326	291	94	

Most young people aged 18-29 do not own these assets, so there is no clear difference among the ratios of ownership of husband/wife/both. However, it should be noted that the percentage of young men aged 18-29 in rural areas owning real estate alone is up to 23.91% while the percentage of only wife owning real estate in rural areas is 0%. For the remaining age groups, the proportion of only husbands owning real estate increases with age group. For example, for the age group of 30-39, 40-49, 50-59 and 60+ in rural areas, the proportions of husband-only property owners increase by 27.13%, 35.28%, 35.74% and 38.3%, respectively. In addition, the proportion of only husbands owning real estate in rural areas is higher than the corresponding age group in urban areas. For other assets such as savings books, business and production facilities, and means of production, there is no significant difference between urban and rural areas.

The results of qualitative analysis show that men in the young group (18-29 and 30-39) tend to be willing to share property ownership with their wives.

Right now, we don't own any valuable possessions. In the future, when we own valuable assets, it does not matter who owns them on paper. If my wife likes it, then I'll let her own the asset. The delineation of assets is intended only for those who think about divorce. My wife and I are determined to live our whole lives together, so it doesn't really matter.

IDI, male, 28 years old, Ha Noi.

The most precious asset of my wife and I is the house. It's owned by both of us on paper. The motorbike is under the wife's name. Later on, when we buy a car, it could also be under my wife's name. In general, real estate is under both names, and the other property is under the name of whom normally using it. If, unfortunately, we divorce later, we will probably split in half all assets."

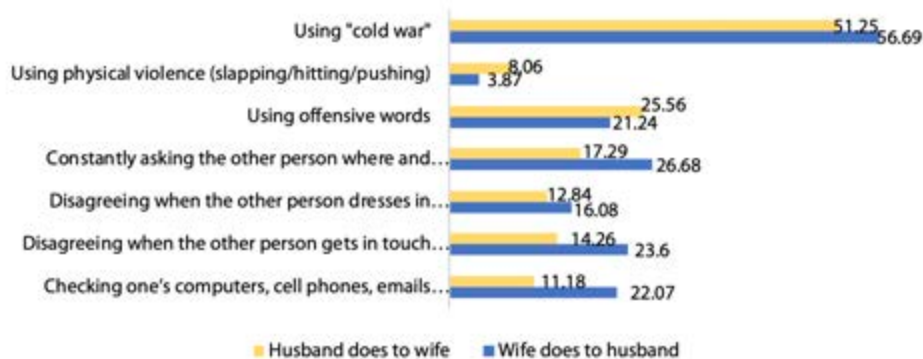
IDI, male, 36 years old, Ha Noi

Most real estate properties in my neighbourhood are only owned by men. It's rare for a woman to own a house or land because a man is more familiar with paperwork and other administrative procedures.

IDI, male 40 years old, Ho Chi Minh city

3.2.2.4. Intimate relationship (with wife/ long term partner)

The results in Figure 3.2.1 below show that in the marriage life, the percentage of men being controlled by their wives/partner is higher than the rate of women being controlled by their husbands/lovers. However, it should be noted that this result is from the answers of the men participating in the study, so it may be biased. A similar survey with women is needed to make this issue clearer. The listed controlling and coercion behaviours include checking one's computers, cell phones, emails and letters; disagreeing when the partner interact with a person of other gender, disagreeing when the partner dresses in certain styles, constantly asking the partner where and what he/she is doing, and using "cold war" (i.e. anger leading to refusal to communicate with the other person and openly discuss the issue). For example, the percentage of wives checking mobile phones/computers/messages/... of their husbands reaches more than 22%, while the percentage of husbands doing this is only about half. However, for behaviours such as using offensive words or using violence against the partner, the percentage of husbands performing is much higher than that of women. Specifically, the rate of men who commit violence (slapping/hitting/pushing) with their wives is 8.06%, while the proportion of women who do this is only 3.87%. More than 25% of men reported ever using offensive language with their wives, compared to 21% among women.

FIGURE 3.2.1. **Rate of sometimes/often controlling partner's behaviour (%)**, N=2,406

The results of the national survey on social determinants of gender inequality in Vietnam conducted by ISDS from 2012 to 2015 have similar results. According to this survey, the rate of men being physically abused by their wives (slapping/hitting/pushing) reaches 2.44%, while the rate of women being abused by their husbands is nearly 3 times (6.71%). The percentage of women verbally abused by husbands is more than 27%, while this rate for men is more than 20%. In addition, the 2010 national study on domestic violence also found that the percentage of women who experienced physical violence by their husbands in the last 12 months was approximately 6%, and 25% of women reported having experienced mental violence for the last 12 months.

Figure 3.2.2, and 3.2.3 below depict the proportion of men and women who use offensive language and physical violence against their partners in the family by age group. An interesting finding is that among the 18-29 age group, the proportions of men and women insulting their partners are approximately the same (17.74% and 18.01%). More specifically, in this age group, the percentage of wives using violence is twice as high as that of husbands using violence (6.2% versus 3.5%). Among all age groups, the 40-49 age group has the highest proportion of husbands using offensive language and violence. (32.87% and 10.67%).

FIGURE 3.2.2. Rate of men using offensive words to partner by age group, N=2,406

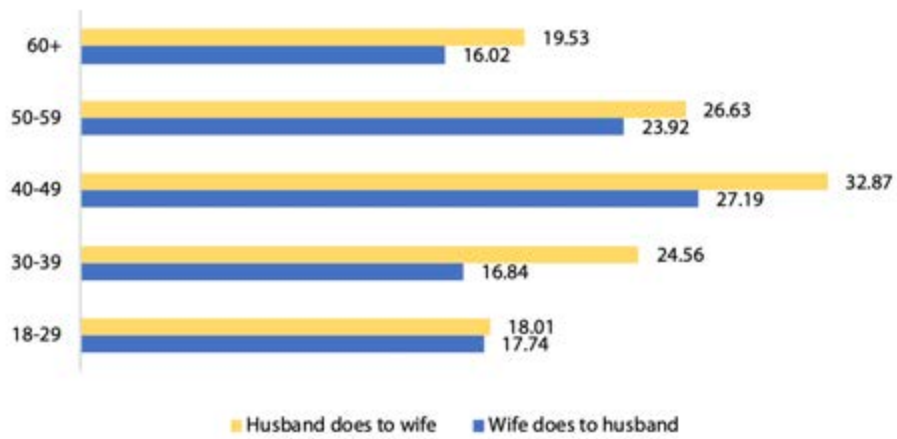


FIGURE 3.2.3. Rate of men using violence against partner by age group, N=2,406

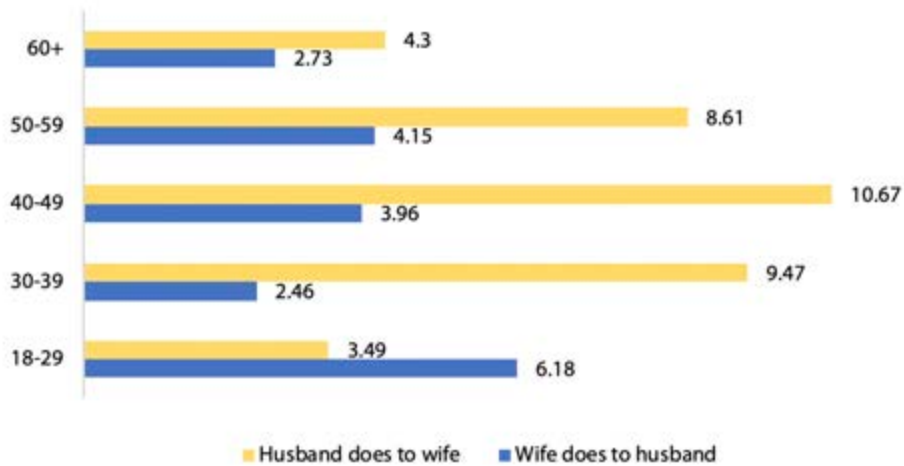
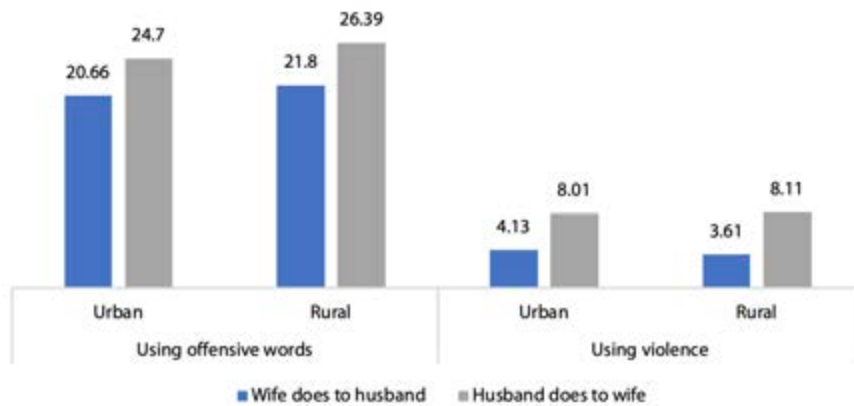


Figure 3.2.4 below depicts the proportion of men and women who use offensive language and physical violence against their partners in the family by area (urban and rural).

FIGURE 3.2.4. **Rate of sometimes/often controlling partner's behaviour (%), N=2,406**

In general, in both urban and rural areas, the proportion of husbands committing these behaviours is higher than that of wives, although this rate is slightly lower in urban areas than in rural areas. For example, 24.7% of the urban men use words to insult their wives, while this rate in rural areas is 26.39%.

The results of qualitative analysis reveal some of the reasons why some Vietnamese men are violent towards their wives. The most common reason stems from the patriarchal ideology that is so ingrained in the minds of Vietnamese people. According to that ideology, a man, who is thought to be the head of the household, should give himself the right to “discipline” his wife and children.

I know some men who beat their wives are unable to stop their anger or control their anger. They think they are men in the house and thus they have greater rights. They believe they have a right to fight their women if their women don't listen to them. I also think that in Vietnam the law is not strict, so violence is more likely to occur.

IDI, male, 23 years old, Hanoi

I think violence comes from men's thoughts. Men always think that they are above anyone else and they are the head of the family. Many men don't have the thought of building family happiness together with their wives; they only care about their individual benefits.

IDI, male, 31 years old, Hoa Binh

[In your opinion, why do many Vietnamese men usually commit violence against their wives?] - I think that has gone through many generations. The old values allow those behaviours to be normal. It enters people's subconsciousness from generation to generation. Women in the family have accepted to be at a lower position than their men for generations. Naturally, such privileges are enjoyed by men. People have never wondered why this is.

IDI, male 54 years old, Hanoi

There are men who believe that alcohol, the feeling of failure, or women's untactful manner could be reasons legitimating men's violence against their wife:

Alcohol, drunkenness or pressures in life make the man unable to control his anger... In my neighbourhood, I know some husbands don't have stable jobs and the burden of earning money is on their wives. Those men usually gather to get drunk. After their wives return home from work, they could beat their wives after a few arguments.

IDI, male, 39 years old, Hoa Binh

[Why do they have violence against their wives?] - I think that some women are not clever and tactful in dealing with issues in her family, resulting in men being angry.

IDI, male, 53 years old, Hoa Binh

3.3. Being a Man in Viet Nam - Reflection of Masculinity

It was not until the mid-1980s that men and masculinity gained the attention of gender researchers in the West. The cause of this change comes not only from the influence of feminist perspectives but also from changes in the reality of men's life,¹²⁶ and evidence from limitations of intervention projects following women in development approach which focused almost exclusively on the role of women in development work and practice.¹²⁷ Before that, men are

126 Jonathan Rutherford, *Men's Silences: Predicaments in Masculinity* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1992); R. Horrocks, *Masculinity in Crisis: Myths, Fantasies And Realities* (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1994), <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230372801>; John MacInnes, *The End of Masculinity : The Confusion of Sexual Genesis and Sexual Difference in Modern Society*, 1st edition (Buckingham England ; Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1998).

127 Sylvia Chant, "From 'Woman-Blind' to 'Man-Kind' Should Men Have More Space in Gender and Development?," *IDS Bulletin* 31, no. 2 (2000): 7–17, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2000.mp31002002.x>; Andrea Cornwall, "Gender, Participation and the Politics of Difference," in *The Myth of Community: Gender Issues in Participatory Development*, ed. Irene Guijt and Meera Kaul Shah (London: Practical Action, 1998), 45–57.

often excluded from development programmes, because they are seen as privilege group that as Cornwall pointed out “Men,” equally thought of as a single category, lurk in the background, imagined as powerful and oppositional figures”.¹²⁸ But more research proved that men are not a homogeneous group and are also affected by gender stereotypes. Scholars stress that it is necessary to understand the different types of masculinity and the ways how they affect women, but also to understand the current gender regimes, including some masculine concepts that can be detrimental to men themselves. In recent years, many gender researchers have called for a shift from listing forms of masculinity to understanding specific masculine practices which are considered meaningful manifestations of being male.¹²⁹

Since the early 2000s, discussion of the diversity of masculinity has begun to emerge in gender research in Vietnam. Authors such as Helle Rydström,¹³⁰ Phillip Martin,¹³¹ describe the different gender practices of men who are under the constant pressure of the notion of a homogeneous masculinity and is defined by nature. In recent years, the increased visibility of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community (LGBT) in Vietnam has inspired authors such as Ngoc, L. B.¹³², Oosterhoff, P (2014) and Paul Horton¹³³ to explore this community and discovered that heteronormativity and the assumption of homogeneity of masculinity had begun to be challenged by the LGBT community. Different groups in this community are negotiating to expand their social space and require acceptance of their diverse gender expression as a symbol of resistance to heteronormativity and hegemonic masculinity. However, in general, Vietnamese gender researchers focused mostly on women, if men are mentioned then their practices are often described under the assumption that men are a homogeneous group. In case, if variations of men’s practices have been documented, they were not discussed with the notion of diversity of masculinity. In particular, there has been no research on the prevalence of different perceptions about masculinity and its variations.

That is why we conducted this study. Although most of the studies mentioned above are qualitative, they have helped us quite a lot in positioning our starting points. However, to get more specific ideas about the topic and content of the study we start with some focus group discussions. Thanks to this, we have an idea of the concepts of men and women about “being a man” in contemporary Vietnamese society.

During the discussion on the question “What is Vietnamese man in Vietnamese society today” four themes were brought up: i) Typical characteristics of Vietnamese men; ii) Important qualities of men; iii) A successful man; and, iii) The “true” man. The discussion of these themes

128 Andrea Cornwall, “Gender, Participation and the Politics of Difference.”

129 Kimmel and Messner, *Men’s Lives*.

130 Helle Rydstrom, “Female and Male ‘Characters,’” in *Gender Practices in Contemporary Vietnam*, ed. Lisa Barbara Welch Drummond and Helle Rydstrom (NUS Press, 2004), 75–96.

131 Philip Martin, “Renovating Masculinity: Urban Men’s Experiences and Emergent Masculinity Models in Đổi Mới Vietnam” (PhD Thesis, 2013).

132 Lung Bich Ngoc, “Exploring Male Homosexuality Identity in Hanoi, Vietnam” (Master Thesis, University of Amsterdam, n.d.).

133 Paul Horton, “Recognising Shadows: Masculinism, Resistance, and Recognition in Vietnam,” *NORMA* 14, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 66–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18902138.2019.1565166>.

suggested us to develop a questionnaire and to determine the how men think about these themes and how common they are among Vietnamese men. These themes are also explored further in the in-depth interviews with men in different age groups.

This section of the report will present qualitative data and findings of the quantitative survey on typical characteristics of Vietnamese men; factors make a man successful, important qualities of men; and the “true” man.

3.3.1. The typical characters of Vietnamese men

Regarding the typical characters of a Vietnamese man, answering our question: “Speaking of Vietnamese men, what characters do you think of as typical one?” Participants of focus group discussion in both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City came up with a fairly consistent “list” of some common characters including “positive” and “negative” one. Interestingly, in their comments, men are often more critical than that of women. They mostly go straight to “negative” characters of men while women often start with more positive remarks.

For example, in a group discussion in Ho Chi Minh City, a woman who works in a joint venture producing leather shoes thus having daily contact with male colleagues from Europe, made the following comment:



Vietnamese men love their families more and care for their families more than foreign men. Vietnamese men are hardworking and responsible [to their families] because they are an important person of the family, like a pillar. Second, I find Vietnamese men extremely selfless. When they are annoyed or angry they might be exploding, shouting loud, but after that, when they cool down, their family is top priority. For nearly 18 years I have been working with European men I have realized that if I start again, I still choose a Vietnamese man but definitely do not marry foreign men.

Woman, focus group discussion, Ho Chi Minh City.

However, most of the participants in the group discussion, both men and women, shared that the *gia trưởng* – paternalistic (bossy and domineering toward wife and children), *sĩ diện* – caring too much about keeping face, and reluctance in sharing household chores were the most typical characteristics of Vietnamese men:



Vietnamese men are really paternalistic. In a poor country, men are always paternalistic, abusing the power. Secondly, they care too much about keeping face, being wasteful in spending e.g. when western men order food, they would order enough to eat but

Vietnamese men would order a full table then waste plenty leftover food. This character is often accompanied by wastefulness.

Men FGD, Me Linh, Ha Noi.

Regarding the Vietnamese men's typical characters, I agree on paternalism. I am paternalistic myself. For example, I found the house is still dirty after my wife cleaned it, I would complain but I don't clean it. Secondly, Vietnamese men do not have the sense of responsibility for the work. Thirdly, they are lazy in doing housework. They hardly do the housework.

Men FGD, Ho Chi Minh city.

Vietnamese men, first character is lack of restraint. At any age, from 11-12 years old to 60-70 years old, they are all easy to get angry. Even educated people, when angry, regardless of being in suit and tie and while drinking coffee, they would jump down to fight. They could not control their feeling. The second is the characteristic that I often say, being authoritative, from top to bottom. I see that these almost reveals the nature of Vietnamese men.

Man, FGD, Ho Chi Minh city.

Being paternalistic often comes with being possessive, controlling expressed through jealousy which is thought to be one of the common characters among men:

I think paternalism and jealousy go together. When one is paternalistic he wants to possess everything. I interviewed 100 men, then all of them said that men can have multiple sexual partners (năm thê bảy thiếp), but women are absolutely not allowed to make any mistake. Men can be forgiven, but women cannot be forgiven. In my life, I have never met a guy who said anything different.

Mixed gender FGD, Ha Noi.

The same woman who works in the aforementioned leather shoe venture continues to talk about difference between Vietnamese men and foreign men.:

...Vietnamese men, I see, care too much about keeping face. Being unable to restrain and caring too much about keeping face are two traits distinguishing them from foreign men.

Mixed gender FGD, Ho Chi Minh city.

Some participants comment that there are differences in characters of men from different regions. Accordingly, Northern men are said to be the most authoritarian. Southern men are seen as the most generous but also the most extravagant. And men from Central region are said to be the most dutiful to their parents:

The most paternalistic are northern men. The southern men are more relaxed, the central ones most listen to the parents.

Male FGD, Ho Chi Minh city.

Men in the South are different from men in the North. The Southerners are generous, willing to share more than the Northerners. I think many Southerners who willing to do charity may not be as rich as the Northerners but they are willing to share with the community. People in the North are sometimes very rich, but only care for relatives in their own family, let alone in their clan.

Mixed gender group, HCM city.

Men in the south have a bad character, drink too much. They would not go home if they are still not drunken. Extremely wasteful.

Man, 47, Ho Chi Minh city.

A paternalistic is a person who makes decision over all family affairs, never discuss, never consult with anyone, make decision on his own. He orders family members to implement his commands. This is a very bad characteristic of Vietnamese men.

(Man, 30, Hoa Binh)

Based on the results of focus group discussions, we developed a survey questionnaire to examine the prevalence of some characteristics thought to be typical for Vietnamese men. Specifically, the question of typical Vietnamese men's characters lists 15 positive and 15 negative characters. Survey participants were asked to select three most typical positive characters and three most typical negative characters of Vietnamese men.

Table 3.3.1 presents the results of the typical positive traits of Vietnamese men that are most chosen by the participants in the study, respectively "caring for the family", "filially pious to parents" and "responsible."

It's worth to note that, "caring for the family" means the sense of men about their duty to feed the family or men's role as breadwinner in their family.

TABLE 3.3.1. **Typical positive characters of Vietnamese men (%)**

	Urban	Rural	General
Three typical positive personalities are the most chosen			
Caring for the family	69.56	73.36	71.48
Filially pious [to parents]	56.39	57.66	57.03
Responsible	37.46	37.18	37.32
N	1268	1299	2,567

Rural men tend to choose the two characters of "caring for their family" and "being filial to their parents" more than urban men, however, the difference is not significant.

Table 3.3.2 describes the choice of different age groups. The older the respondents the more they choose "caring for the family". For example, the age group of 18-29 has the least percentage of those who selected this characteristic compared to the other four groups. Perhaps this is related to a higher proportion of unmarried people in this group than that in older groups. "Paying filial piety with parents" is a central value in Vietnamese society, so it is almost a constant across all age groups. "Being responsible" is surprisingly more likely to be selected by the youngest group, 18-29 years old, compared to the rest.

TABLE 3.3.2. **Typical positive characters of Vietnamese men (%)**

	18-29	30-39	40-40	50-59	60+	General
Most selected three positive characters						
Caring for the family	64.39	75.04	70.09	74.88	71.81	71.48
Filially pious [to parents]	57.75	57.70	57.09	56.24	56.37	57.03
Responsible	46.68	38.95	34.19	32.07	35.52	37.32

More interesting, when analysing the combinations of each of the three characters selected to find out which characters are chosen by the same person. We found that out of the 14 most common combinations, the “caring for families” was present in all 14 combinations, “filially pious to the parents” present in the 9 combinations and “responsible” is present in 5 combinations

As such, all three of the most chosen positive characters are related to the family. This result shows that the family is an important value for men in Vietnam.

Table 3.3.3 presents the results of typical negative characters. Among the three most-selected negative characters, the “paternalistic” ranks number one as being selected by more than half of the men in the sample, “caring too much about keeping face”, and “liking of gathering and drinking” rank second and third with one third of the votes.

TABLE 3.3.3. **Most typical negative characteristics of Vietnamese men (%)**

	Urban	Rural	General
Three most selected negative characteristics			
Paternalistic*	56.52	51.19	53.88
Caring too much about keeping face**	35.02	30.95	32.96
Liking of gathering and drinking	31.94	32.33	32.14
N	1268	1299	2,567

* Bossy and domineering toward wife and children
 ** Being afraid of losing face, trying to boast or doing other things to gain respect/admiration.

Regarding the three typical negative characters, there are significant differences between urban and rural areas. Urban men are more likely to think “paternalistic” and “caring too much about keeping face” are negative characters than rural men, 56.62% compared to 51.19% and 35.02% compared to 30.95%, respectively. Regarding the “liking of gathering and drinking” there is no significant difference.

Table 3.3.4 presents perception of respondents of different age groups on typical negative characteristics of Vietnamese men. In general, young men tend to be more critical about negative characteristics of men in general are compared to older men. Particularly, the younger the age, the more men tend to regard “paternalistic” and “caring too much about keeping face” as typical men’s negative character. As for “liking of gathering and drinking”, the younger the men, the less they consider it a negative character. Specifically, 25.55% in the 18-29 age group and 28.67% in the 30-39 age group compared to 33.68% in the 40-49 age group and 37.11% in the 50-year-old group.

TABLE 3.3.4. **Most typical negative characters of Vietnamese men**

	18-29	30-39	40-40	50-59	60+	General
Three most selected negative characters						
Paternalistic	56.94	55.82	52.31	49.76	47.14	53.88
Caring too much about keeping face	39.44	34.74	29.74	30.02	30.89	32.96
Liking of gathering and drinking	25.55	28.67	33.68	38.70	33.20	32.14

The higher the educational attainment, the more likely respondents are to regard “paternalistic” and “caring too much about keeping face” as men’s typical negative characters. For example, 64.32% of men with college / university education regard “paternalistic” as a negative characteristic compared to 37.32% of those with primary education, 50.62% of those with lower secondary education and 57.01% of those with upper secondary education. The same trend is observed in the perception of “caring too much about keeping face.”

Analysis of the combination of the three characteristics each participant selected found that, among the 14 combinations of the negative characteristics that were most selected, the combination included the characters of “paternalistic”, “caring too much about keeping face” and “lazy” are the most selected. In addition, the “paternalistic” is present in all 14 combinations, the “caring too much about keeping face” is present in 8 combinations “liking of gathering and drinking” is present in 4 combinations.

The three typical negative traits selected by many respondents including “paternalistic”, “caring too much about keeping face”, “liking of gathering and drinking” may help to explain why Vietnamese men are more likely to own family property, make decisions, share little housework and are more likely to perpetrate domestic violence.

3.3.2. Work and Masculinity

Work and masculinity have a strong association¹³⁴ as work helps men fit into the gender norm of being the family’s pillar. Having a stable job with a decent salary and being able to provide for the family are the symbols of strength of masculinity¹³⁵. Having an occupation and income allow men to maintain their power and position in the family and the community¹³⁶. For young men, being able to work also marks their maturity and independency when their dependence on the parents finishes and the adulthood starts¹³⁷, which means the ability to have their own family where they become the pillar. Furthermore, for men, through work, they can prove their

134 Nigel Edley, *Men and Masculinity: The Basics*, 1 edition (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 76.

135 Christian Haywood and Mairtin Mac an Ghaill, *Men and Masculinities: Theory, Research, and Social Practice* (Open University Press: Open Univ, 2003).

136 Tolson, *The Limits of Masculinity*.

137 Paul E Willis, *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* (Farnborough, Eng.: Saxon House, 1977), <http://books.google.com/books?id=R0MHAQAAIAAJ>.

personal capability, build up their image and social reputation, from which create their social position. Therefore, working and having a good job in order to achieve those goals has always been men's top priority.

Work is vital for men, yet it does not mean that men are willing to take up any kinds of work because work has been deeply gendered. Gender division of labour is a global issue that has been persisting for centuries. Globalisation, nonetheless, has been challenging that division. Labour structure is currently under a transformation. Machines and automation have replaced physical labour work and opened up opportunities for women to take part in what are traditionally men's work and forced men to accept to work in service sector which was traditionally dominated by women. Changes in gender structure in economic sectors in Vietnam in recent years have indicated a clear movement. In 2010, the rate of men working in service sector was 27.8%, and in 2018, this figure increased to 33%. The percentage of women in industrial sector and in construction in 2010 was 17.2% but in 2018 rose to 22.9%.

Amidst these changes, what do Vietnamese men think about their work? What kinds of job are favoured by men in such a changing society nowadays, and what do their preferences mean?

To answer these questions, we asked the respondents to review to a list of occupations /sectors and answer the question of "In your opinion, what kinds of occupation/sector are currently being favoured by Vietnamese men?" Each respondent could select three kinds of occupation/sector that they thought to be liked most by men nowadays.

Table 3.3.5 demonstrates the occupations/ sectors that are favoured with different rates of selection. Those most selected were government officers, followed by police/ army force, ranked third is business/sales, subsequently doctors, and lastly information technology (IT). The occupations/ sectors that were least selected are scientific research, craft, and occupations in agriculture/ forestry/ fishery.

There are no significant differences between rural and urban populations regarding the sectors except for 'business/sales', 'IT', and 'finance/banking' as the urban respondents said to favour these sectors remarkably more than their rural counterparts.

Between the provinces, Hoa Binh and Khanh Hoa have a much higher proportion of respondents selecting 'government officers' as favourite jobs (51.24% and 44.29%) compared to that in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city (32.81% and 36.53% respectively). Meanwhile, the respondents in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city appear to favour 'business/sales' more (45.55% and 33.96% in comparison to 31.77% and 25.00% in Hoa Binh and Khanh Hoa respectively).

TABLE 3.3.5. **Most favoured occupations/ work sectors (rate of selecting) (%)**

Most favoured occupations/work sector	Urban	Rural	Rate
Government officers	41.83	39.68	40.74
Police/ Army	37.14	39.13	38.15
Agriculture/ Forestry/ Fishery	5.40	7.12	6.27
Craft	3.57	5.49	4.54
Teachers	7.22	6.96	7.09
Scientific research	4.21	3.02	3.6
Doctors	17.78	17.79	17.78
Engineers	11.03	13.23	12.14
Business/ Sales	37.14	31.79	34.43
Law	2.38	2.71	2.55
IT	19.21	12.76	15.94
Finance/ Banking	11.19	7.12	9.13
Art	2.79	2.09	2.43
Communication/ Marketing	3.65	3.33	3.49
Social service	3.89	4.72	4.31
Others	1.19	1.47	1.33
Don't know	9.92	15.47	12.73

Being a government officer has been a dream job of many Vietnamese over the last century as it means having a secure job forever. Having a job in the government brings not only stable income but also numerous benefits such as insurance, paid holidays, sick leaves, and training opportunities. It could also mean opportunities for promotion in both professional and political careers. In Vietnam, 'government officer' is also a social status. Therefore, it is no surprise that 'government officers' lead as the most favoured job in Vietnam. According to the General Statistics Office in 2017, among 26.9 million Vietnamese workers, government officers accounted for over 3.8 million¹³⁸. As the rate of government officers among the population stands at 4.8%, which means in every 20 citizens there is one government officer, Vietnam has become the country with the highest number of government officers in ASEAN.¹³⁹

In almost all over the world, police and army are the symbols of power and social order and these two sectors are dominated by men.¹⁴⁰ (The occupation of policing is one that is traditionally associated with men and regarded as a masculine sphere.). Policemen and soldiers in any given cultures have always been considered the symbols of masculinity. In Vietnam, the long-lasting war history reaffirmed that even more. What's more, besides the symbolisation, policemen and soldiers have similar as high status as government officers (except those in 18 month mandatory services). Salary and benefits from these sectors are even higher than similar positions in the government system. These could explain why this sector was selected as the second most favoured

138 An Linh, "Cứ 7 Lao Động Phải 'Nuôi' 1 Công Chức, Viên Chức và Người Hưởng Lương (For Every 7 Laborers, They Must 'Pay' 1 Government Paid Employee)," *Dân Trí*, 2018, 7, <https://dantri.com.vn/kinh-doanh/cu-7-lao-dong-phai-nuoi-1-cong-chuc-vien-chuc-va-nguoi-huong-luong-2018091910520925.htm>.

139 "Việt Nam Đồng Công Chức, Viên Chức Nhất Đông Nam Á (Vietnam Has the Most Civil Servants and Officials in Southeast Asia)," *VnExpress*, 2017, <https://vnexpress.net/goc-nhin/viet-nam-dong-cong-chuc-vien-chuc-nhat-dong-nam-a-3669338.html>.

140 Jennifer Brown, "From Cult of Masculinity to Smart Macho: Gender Perspectives on Police Occupational Culture," in *Sociology of Crime Law and Deviance*, vol. 8 (Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing, 2007), 1–22, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1521-6136\(07\)08008-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1521-6136(07)08008-6).

work sector by men. This has also reflected in the fact that university entrance requirements for police and army universities have been among the most difficult yet the number of applicants have always far exceeded the number of available places.¹⁴¹

‘Business/Sales’ is ranked third in the list of most favourite occupations/ sectors by men. This sector used to be looked down upon in the traditional Vietnamese society and was almost completely abolished as it was linked to exploitation. However, since Reform (Doi Moi), businessmen have become highly appreciated. The image of a businessman in suit and black leather shoes stepping out of his shining car is now a new symbol of masculinity, representing wealth, proactivity, and skilfulness. While rich businessmen used to be discriminated for a long time before, today they are respected and welcomed. Some successful businessmen are publicly recognised as national talents by the country’s leaders with pictures and names regularly featured in Forbes Vietnam. Business companies have sprung up like mushrooms after the rain in recent years, indicating the shift in their social position.

Information technology has also been a highly valued sector in recent years with IT engineering being a trendy job with high income and social status. A young engineer concentrating on his computer is now a symbol of modern masculinity representing intelligence and excellency in technology. There is even the title of Technology Knight to cherish outstanding individuals in this sector in Vietnam.

Differences between age groups regarding their perception about men’s favourite occupations have been recorded. Table 3.3.6 shows that the youngest male group aged 18 – 29 does not like to become government officers as much as the other age groups. This group, on the other hand, tends to prefer more ‘modern’ jobs such as in IT, in ‘finance/banking’ or in ‘communication/marketing’.

141 Lê Huyền, “Điểm Chuẩn 2018 Của Các Trường Công an (Admission Score for Police Schools in 2018),” Vietnamnet, 2018, <https://vietnamnet.vn/vn/giao-duc/tuyen-sinh/diem-chuan-cac-truong-cong-an-nam-2018-468322.html>; Quyên Quyên, “18 Trường Quân Đội Công Bố Điểm Chuẩn 2019 (18 Military Schools Announce the 2019 Admission Score),” Zing.Vn, 2019, <https://news.zing.vn/18-truong-quan-doi-cong-bo-diem-chuan-2019-post976144.html>.

TABLE 3.3.6. Perception of respondents about favourite occupations/sectors disaggregated by age

Favourite occupations/ sectors	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Government officers	16.79	18.19	19.53	19.86	20.72
Police/ Army	17.37	18.19	18.20	16.01	19.20
Agriculture/ Forestry/ Fishery	2.49	2.26	4.07	2.75	3.04
Craft	2.24	2.04	2.08	2.28	1.52
Teachers	2.58	3.62	2.91	4.08	2.85
Scientific research	1.16	1.66	1.33	2.35	1.90
Doctors	7.81	7.62	7.65	9.11	9.70
Engineers	5.49	7.02	4.74	5.34	4.94
Business/ Sales	15.21	16.53	16.45	15.54	15.40
Law	1.41	1.43	1.50	0.71	0.38
IT	10.31	7.25	5.32	6.51	7.60
Finance/ Banking	5.90	4.75	3.91	3.06	3.47
Art	2.83	1.43	0.33	0.31	0.19
Communication/ Marketing	3.41	1.58	1.08	0.78	0.76
Social service	2.49	1.74	2.16	1.49	2.28
Others	0.25	0.45	0.91	0.94	0.38
Don't know	2.24	4.23	7.81	8.87	6.65
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Some young male participants in the qualitative research also stated that for the young generation, nowadays, work does not necessarily have to be linked to the government:



Career is a job in which we can grow more and more, it does not have to be in the government. Like myself here, I run a business and I still contribute very well, no need to be a government officer.

Male FGD, Ho Chi Minh city.

To conclude, the majority of male respondents in our study sample favours occupations that are traditionally identified with men such as government officers, police/ army, and business/ sales. Jobs in these areas bringing high income, stability, and social status, which are the factors influencing a man's success. A minor difference in age groups was witnessed. Age group 18 – 29 tends to like 'traditional' jobs less and prefer 'modern' ones more. The linkage between masculinity and occupations has also become more diverse. The political status of government officers is still in favour, the power and strength of police/army officers continue to be valued in Vietnam, however nowadays the proactivity of businessmen is being more and more appreciated, and the modernity of IT engineers has become an attractive masculinity trait for the young.

3.3.3. The notion of ‘a true man’

From the first group discussions and later in the qualitative research which conducted in parallel to the survey, when sharing their thoughts on men today, the theme ‘true man’ appeared and discussed very lively among the participants.

According to the participants, the ‘true man’ has many good qualities but first of all he must be the one who takes care of his family, caring for relatives:



A ‘true man’ means he has to be able to take care of his family, has to have a stable job, educate his children well, and fulfil his filial piety to his parents.

Man, 28 years old, Hanoi.



Basically, everything in the family has to be taken care of. First have to take care of the family. Second is to have a proper job because it shows that he is decent and capable. Then he must have good morality, in the family and outside in the society. In the society he has to behave so that people like him. Has to be considerate.

Male, 32 years old, Hoa Binh.

For the young, the concept of “true man” is articulated broader to encompass the ability to earn money but at the same time good morality, though having high social status he must not abuse the vulnerable:



I think for young people, a true man is not only about earning money but he has to have good morality. Generally, he has to work and live with decency and honesty. In his family he has to treat his wife and children well. In the society he has to be honest and fair, if he is in a position of power, he still does not abuse others

Men FGD, Ho Chi Minh city.

The true man dares to take risk but never abandons his family duties:



Dare to think and dare to take action, he must be ambitious to have money. He has to care about his family, be good to his parents, be mature.

(Man, 27 years old, Khanh Hoa.)

An noteworthy point is that the majority of participants of focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, regardless their age, social background, living area, almost all emphasize the men's role of "pillar" in the family as central criteria of the "true man":

Men have always been the pillar of the family. From the past until today.

Man, 41 years old. Ha Noi

In Viet Nam, the role of a man in the family is huge, he is the pillar, the decision maker, on the front line.

Male, 30 years old, Hanoi.

As a man I have to take care of my family, I have to be the pillar of the family.

Male FGD, Hanoi.

To be the family's pillar is the duty of a man, the duty to manage well everything in the family.

Male, 34 years old, Hoa Binh.

When talking about their 'pillar' role, men often affirms their importance and superior over women, a good example can be found here:

A man has to be the pillar of the family, which means he has to ensure education for his children and provide for the family. Basically I don't have the gender prejudice mentality but women... in general can't be compared to men. If I do 10, they can only do 8. They are also capable and can do many things but just not as well.

Male FGD, Hoa Binh.

Below is an interesting conversation of a 63-year-old man from Khanh Hoa with our interviewer. The man explained what it means to be a pillar and very firmly stated his pillar position in the family:

A true man has to be a good example and a pillar in the family... (What do you mean by a pillar?). Ah, that is quite simple, I am the husband, the father, I have to think of a way to earn money to provide for my family... I have to be on the front line when it comes to all the hard work... A man needs to be the decision maker, in an organisation if all are directors then who will be the employees? (Should the wife be the director?). No, she can't. (Why?) As I said, men are the pillar so men have to be the decision maker. (So women can't be the pillar?) No, women can't be the pillar. Well in reality in some families women are the pillar but not in my family.

Male, 63 years old, Khanh Hoa.

The pillar role is a symbol of the Vietnamese men. It does not only indicate the main economic role but also carries a mental value, therefore it is extremely persistent. Even if a man cannot fulfill his role as a breadwinner of the family, he is still the pillar and the decision maker:

In my family, my husband is the pillar. Even though the husband may not earn as much as the wife, his position is still higher. In my family, for example, everything from earning money to handling family relationships and taking care of the children is on me, but I still respect the man because without a man the family will be different. All decisions in the family still need to be made by him.

Female FGD, Hoa Binh.

My husband always earn less than me, just a third of what I earn but I don't know why he is still the pillar. If I want to do anything big like to build a house, I can pay for that myself, my husband contributes nothing, but I still have to ask for his permission.

Female FGD, Ho Chi Minh city.

Based on the results of the first group discussions, when designing the survey tool we developed a scale to measure what a 'true man' involves and how popular the notion is among men. The respondents were asked to answer the question 'In our today's society, there are different ideas about what it means to be a 'true man'. Below are some statements about the 'true man.' Do you agree or disagree with these statements?'. Respondents were to select whether 'agree' or 'disagree' to each of the statement in the total of 26 statements categorised into four main aspects of a man's life as listed in table 3.3.7.

Table 3.3.7 below demonstrates the rate of participants agreeing to each of the statement by age and area. Regarding career, most respondents agreed that a true man has to ‘prioritise his career’ and ‘have highly skilled jobs (doctors, engineers etc.)’, and the agreement rate increases as the age increases. ‘Having high education attainment’ and ‘trying to become a leader and make decisions’ also tend to be more important to the older men than the younger ones. Those agreeing to the quality of ‘trying to be a member of the Communist Party and have a high position in the government’ account for about two third of the respondents but the older men seem to value this criterion higher than the men of younger age groups. The disparity between urban and rural men is the most noticeable in the criterion of ‘trying to be a member of the Communist Party and have a high position in the government’, while for other criteria, the difference between urban and rural men is not so clear.

Regarding capability and personality, almost all respondents agreed that a true man has to ‘know to use modern technology devices’, ‘strive for himself and his family not to be inferior to others’ and ‘have wide social connections’. The difference among the age groups as well as between urban and rural areas is not discernible. Besides, the majority of men do not value the quality of ‘knowing to drink alcohol well’.

In terms of physical strength, appearance and lifestyle, the majority of the respondents highly regard traditional masculinity traits related to the look and personality such as ‘must have a strong body’, and ‘must be strong and do not show weakness’, or ‘dare to take risks and challenges’ and ‘must be proactive in approaching women and always be generous and protective towards women’. It is noticeable that the quality of ‘proactively approach women and always be generous and protective towards women’ is more popular to the young men than the old ones. There is no wide gap between urban and rural areas.

For duties in the family, similar to the qualitative study, throughout the quantitative research, it can be seen that family is always a central value for Vietnamese men. A true man firstly has to ‘be the family’s pillar’ and ‘earn enough money to provide for his wife and children’. Because of this, even though career is the top priority, in reality, it is just a tool to help true men to fulfil their role of breadwinner in the family. In addition, ‘being responsible for ancestor worshipping’ and ‘getting married and having children’ are highly rated by the majority of respondents as criteria of a true man, and the older the man, the more likely he is to value those qualities. One point to note here is that rural men tend to more highly appreciate the criterion of ‘getting married and having children’ than urban men. Although the agreement rate on ‘having son’ is the lowest, it is worth noticing that rural men are more likely to agree to that quality than urban men.

TABLE 3.3.7. Perception about a true man by age and area, % AGREE, N=2,567

		by AGE						by AREA	
		Total	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	Urban	Rural
Regarding his career, a true man has to									
1	Prioritize career first	88.31	85.31	84.32	89.4	91.94	91.89	87.85	88.76
2	Have high education attainment	75.85	69.82	69.65	76.92	82.31	83.4	74.37	77.29
3	Striving to become a member of the Communist Party and having a high position in the state system	68.21	59.36	63.07	70.26	76.62	71.81	64.51	71.82
4	Have highly skilled jobs (doctors, engineers etc.)	86.33	80.48	82.29	88.21	90.52	92.28	86.36	86.3
5	Try to become a leader and make decisions	83.48	81.69	81.28	84.79	84.99	85.33	82.81	84.14
Regarding social aspect and personality, a true man has to									
6	Know to drink alcohol well	46.79	44.06	43	49.23	52.45	41.31	46.45	47.11
7	Know to use modern technology devices	90.96	90.34	91.06	90.43	91.94	90.73	92.67	89.3
8	Show generosity	78.5	75.05	74.37	80.68	81.2	83.01	79.57	77.44
9	Strive for himself and his family not to be inferior to others	96.57	97.38	97.13	96.58	96.05	94.98	95.98	97.15
10	Have broad social connections	96.38	94.16	95.78	97.44	97.79	96.14	97.32	95.46
Regarding health, appearance and lifestyle, a true man has to									
11	Have no physical shortcomings	61.94	56.54	61.21	57.26	66.19	74.13	62.62	61.28
12	Have a strong body	95.75	95.17	95.78	94.7	96.52	97.3	96.69	94.84
13	Have strong and decisive mannerism	90.42	84.91	88.87	92.31	93.52	92.66	90.93	89.92
14	Dare to take risks and challenges	94.78	94.77	94.6	94.36	95.26	94.98	95.43	94.15
15	Be strong, cannot show weakness.	96.14	94.16	94.94	97.09	97.31	97.68	96.53	95.77
16	Be willing to use power when needed to protect his honour	83.64	77.67	81.96	87.01	87.52	81.85	83.2	84.06
17	Have strong sexual ability	67.16	66.8	66.44	69.74	66.19	66.02	68.38	65.97
18	Have rich sexual experience	59.45	57.14	53.96	61.37	63.82	61.39	58.36	60.51
19	Be proactive and leading during sexual activities	68.45	66.2	64.92	70.09	72.2	67.95	68.85	68.05
20	Never engage in sexual activities with other men	79	77.67	75.55	78.46	82.31	82.63	80.6	77.44
21	Proactively approach women and always be generous and protective towards women	92.44	95.57	93.25	91.11	90.68	91.89	92.03	92.84
Regarding duties in the family, a true man has to									
22	Be responsible for ancestor worshipping	95.6	94.16	93.93	96.41	97	96.91	94.72	96.46
23	Get married and have children	95.56	91.75	95.11	97.44	96.68	96.91	93.77	97.31
24	Have sons	59.52	55.53	55.82	61.03	63.35	62.93	57.1	61.89
25	Earn enough money to provide for his wife and children	98.17	98.59	98.82	98.12	97.63	97.3	97.48	98.85
26	Be the family's pillar	98.52	98.19	98.82	97.61	99.05	99.23	98.19	98.85

While the notion of true men is popular among surveyed men, the tendency of traditional qualities to be fading out across age groups is quite noticeable. Younger men less value traditional typical masculine traits than older men do. Similar trend is also observed when comparing urban men with their rural counterpart. Urban men tend to less value traditional typical masculine traits than rural men do.

3.3.4. Factor Analysis

Horizon and Promundo developed a scale to measure men's attitude towards gender equality (Gender Equitable Men Scale -GEMS) with the aim to measure their attitudes towards gender equality norms. GEMS was built to provide information about the common norms in the community and the effectiveness of interventions targeting the changes of those norms.¹⁴² We adapt the method used in building GEMS to develop a scale to measure 'true man' and used factor analysis to test the effectiveness of this scale. First, we selected the factors of the scale by applying 'eigen value'.¹⁴³ After identifying the 'factors', we used 'promax rotation' to find the correlation between 'items' and 'factors'. Items with loading factors at or higher than 0.3 will be kept. The factor analysis results show that: 4 factors were identified (eigen value >1). Three items with factor loading less than 0.3 in all factors were eliminated from the scale.¹⁴⁴ Reliability of the scale after the elimination of these seven questions was good (Cronbach's alpha = 0.85). We found that all items in the same factor belong to one domain. Given their meaning, we named them as: Domain 1: Career; Domain 2: Capability and personality; Domain 3: Physical strength; and Domain 4: Family duties (Table 3.3.8)

142 Julie Pulerwitz and Gary Barker, "Measuring Attitudes toward Gender Norms among Young Men in Brazil: Development and Psychometric Evaluation of the GEM Scale," *Men and Masculinities*, May 18, 2007, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X06298778>.

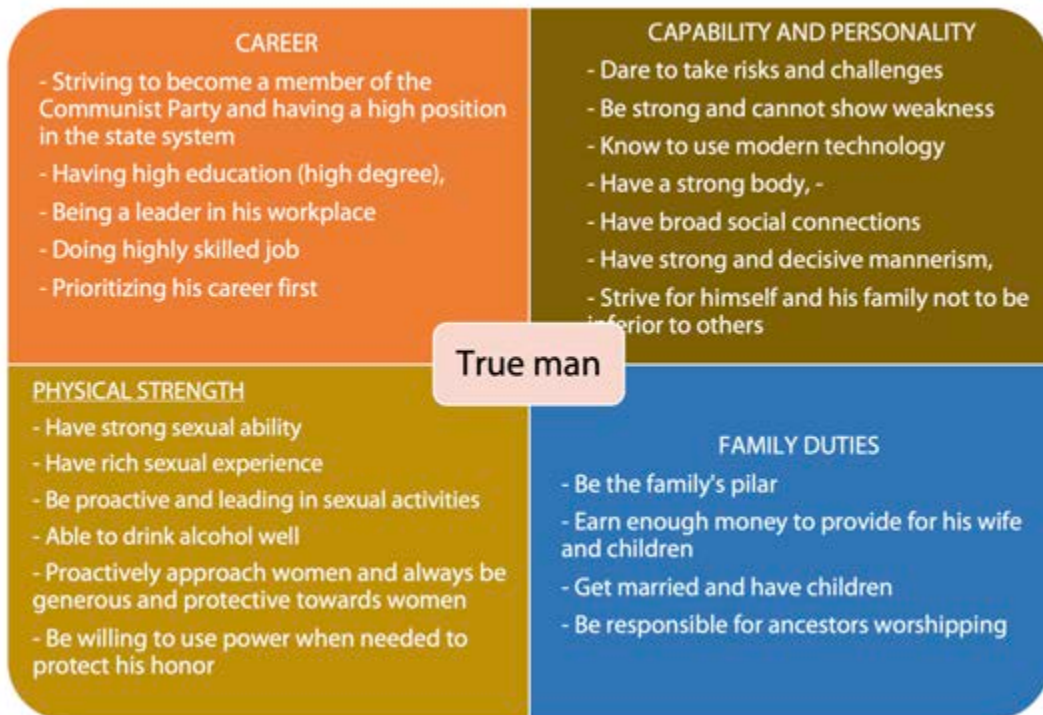
143 Eigen values are most commonly reported in factor analyses. The eigen value for a given factor measures the variance in all the variables which is accounted for by that factor. The ratio of eigen values is the ratio of explanatory importance of the factors with respect to the variables. If a factor has a low eigen value, then it is contributing little to the explanation of variances in the variables and may be ignored as redundant with more important factors. Eigen values measure the amount of variation in the total sample accounted for by each factor.

144 Richard L Gorsuch, *Factor Analysis* (Hillsdale : Erlbaum, 1983).

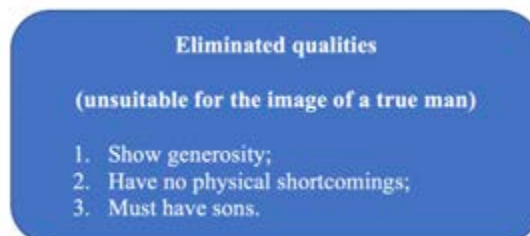
TABLE 3.3.8. Factor and factor loading of statements about true man image

Criteria/qualities of 'true man'	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4
Career				
1. Striving to become a member of the Communist Party and having a high position in the state system	0.81			
2. Have high education attainment	0.80			
3. Try to become a leader and make decisions	0.70			
4. Have highly skilled jobs (doctors, engineers etc.)	0.69			
5. Prioritise career first	0.52			
Capability and Personality				
6. Dare to take risks and challenges		0.77		
7. Be strong, cannot show weakness		0.62		
8. Know how to use modern technology devices		0.57		
9. Have a strong body		0.53		
10. Have broad social connections		0.53		
11. Have strong and decisive mannerism		0.58		
12. Strive for himself and his family not to be inferior to others		0.52		
Physical strength				
13. Have strong sexual ability			0.82	
14. Be proactive and leading during sexual activities			0.78	
15. Have rich sexual experience			0.74	
16. Never engage in sexual activities with other men			0.43	
17. Proactively approach women and always be generous and protective towards women			0.40	
18. Able to drink alcohol well			0.40	
19. Be willing to use power when needed to protect his honour			0.40	
Family duties				
20. Be the family's pillar				0.77
21. Earn enough money to provide for his wife and children				0.72
22. Get married and have children				0.69
23. Be responsible for ancestor worshipping				0.65

Thus, from the results of the survey and the results of qualitative research we can outline the portrait of the 'true man' with at least 23 criteria in 4 aspects of the man's life: career, capability and personality, physical strength and duty to the family (Box 3.3.1). In the portrait of the 'true man', most of the criteria are traditional masculine stereotypes. Even the criterion of "Striving to become a member of the Communist Party and having a high position in the state system" can be considered "traditional" to many young people nowadays. Becoming a member of the Communist Party is a condition to achieve a high position in the state system. The criterion "Know to use modern technology devices" is essentially a traditional masculine expectation of men's technical competence.

BOX 3.3.1. **A true man**

Box 3.3.2 lists 3 criteria that were excluded from the “true man” scale. This exclusion means that men in the sample do not think that the ‘true man’ must be good looking, shows generosity and has a son. The fact that these criteria are excluded from the ‘true man’ scale reflects the presence of less rigid masculine stereotypes.

BOX 3.3.2. **Unsuitable qualities of a ‘true man’**

To examine variation of “true man” among different groups of men we use factor analysis to test the impact of the variables of age and urban-rural. The results are described in the Table 3.39 and 3.3.10 below.

TABLE 3.3.9. The notion of “True man” by age groups

Total sample	18-29	30-39	50 and older
CAREER			
Striving to become a member of the Communist Party and having a high position in the state system Having high education attainment (high degree) Striving to become a leader in his workplace Doing highly skilled job Prioritizing his career first	Striving to become a member of the Communist Party and having a high position in the state system Having high education attainment (high degree), Striving to become a leader in his workplace Doing highly skilled job Prioritizing his career first Have broad social connections	Striving to become a member of the Communist Party and having a high position in the state system Having high education attainment (high degree) Striving to become a leader in his workplace Doing highly skilled job Prioritizing his career first	Striving to become a member of the Communist Party and having a high position in the state system Having high education attainment (high degree) Striving to become a leader in his workplace Doing highly skilled job Prioritizing his career first
CAPABILITY AND PERSONALITY			
Dare to take risks and challenges Be strong, cannot show weakness Know how to use modern technology devices Have a strong body Have strong and decisive mannerism Have broad social connections Strive for himself and his family not to be inferior to others	Dare to take risks and challenges Be strong, cannot show weakness Know how to use modern technology devices Have a strong body Have strong and decisive mannerism	Dare to take risks and challenges Be strong, cannot show weakness Know how to use modern technology devices Have a strong body Have strong and decisive mannerism Have broad social connections Strive for himself and his family not to be inferior to others Proactively approach women and always be generous and protective towards women	Dare to take risks and challenges Be strong, cannot show weakness Know how to use modern technology devices Have broad social connections Strive for himself and his family not to be inferior to others Proactively approach women and always be generous and protective towards women
PHYSICAL STRENGTH			
Have strong sexual ability Be proactive and leading during sexual activities Have rich sexual experience Never engage in sexual activities with other men Proactively approach women and always be generous and protective towards women Able to drink alcohol well Be willing to use power when needed to protect his honour	Have strong sexual ability Be proactive and leading during sexual activities Have rich sexual experience Be willing to use power when needed to protect his honour Have no physical shortcomings	Have strong sexual ability Be proactive and leading during sexual activities Have rich sexual experience Able to drink alcohol well Have no physical shortcomings Must have a son	Have strong sexual ability Be proactive and leading during sexual activities Have rich sexual experience Never engage in sexual activities with other men Able to drink alcohol well Must have a son

TABLE 3.3.9. The notion of “True man” by age groups (cont.)

Total sample	18-29	30-39	50 and older
DUTIES TO THE FAMILY			
Be the family's pillar	Be the family's pillar	Be the family's pillar	Be the family's pillar
Earn enough money to provide for his wife and children	Earn enough money to provide for his wife and children	Earn enough money to provide for his wife and children	Earn enough money to provide for his wife and children
Get married and have children	Get married and have children	Get married and have children	Get married and have children
Be responsible for ancestor worshipping	Be responsible for ancestor worshipping	Be responsible for ancestor worshipping	Be responsible for ancestor worshipping
	Proactively approach women and always be generous and protective towards women		

As shown in the Table 3.3.9, in the domain “Career” and the domain “Duties to the family” there is a strong consistency across all three age groups in term of criteria of the true man. The only difference is that in the 18-29 age group, in the domain “Career” there is one more criterion “Having broad social connections.” Perhaps, for young people, having broad social connections could be important mean for them to navigate in the world of adulthood. Indeed, in the nowadays society of Viet Nam, many people believe that, having broad social connections is also an important quality of a man who want to pursuit his career. Anecdotally, broad social connection (quan hệ) is one of three utmost important conditions for one to be successful, that are being a child of powerful parents (hậu duệ), having a lot of money (tiền tệ) and having connections with powerful people (quan hệ). In the domain “Duties to the family”, there is almost no difference between the age groups in terms of the criteria of the true man. It is interesting that young men in the age group of 18-29 think that the criterion “proactively approach women and always be generous and protective towards women” should belong to this domain.

In the domain Capacity and Personality, men in all three age groups share most of key criteria of the true man. However, young men of 18-29 age group have fewer criteria as compared to the older age groups. For example, they don't think that the true man should “strive not to make himself and his family inferior to others” and must “have a son”. But young men do care about “strong body.”

In the domain Physical strength, only men in the age group of 50 and older thought true man should “never engage in sexual activities with other men”. Men in two younger groups did not share the same thought. This may imply a shift to a more open attitude toward sexual orientation among young people today than those of older generations. Young men of the 18-29 age group do not support the ideas that true man should be “able to drink alcohol well” and must have a son like men in the older age groups but because they are young, they tend to “be willing to use power when needed to protect his honor.”

TABLE 3.3.10. The notion of “True man” by age groups by rural-urban

Total sample	Rural	Urban
CAREER		
Striving to become a member of the Communist Party and having a high position in the state system Having high education attainment (high degree) Striving to become a leader in his workplace Doing highly skilled job Prioritizing his career first	Striving to become a member of the Communist Party and having a high position in the state system Having high education attainment (high degree) Striving to become a leader in his workplace Doing highly skilled job Prioritizing his career first	Striving to become a member of the Communist Party and having a high position in the state system Having high education attainment (high degree) Striving to become a leader in his workplace Doing highly skilled job Prioritizing his career first
CAPABILITY AND PERSONALITY		
Dare to take risks and challenges Be strong, cannot show weakness Know how to use modern technology devices Have a strong body Have strong and decisive mannerism Have broad social connections Strive for himself and his family not to be inferior to others	Dare to take risks and challenges Be strong, cannot show weakness Know how to use modern technology devices Have broad social connections Strive for himself and his family not to be inferior to others Proactively approach women and always be generous and protective towards women	Dare to take risks and challenges Be strong, cannot show weakness Know how to use modern technology devices Have a strong body Have strong and decisive mannerism Have broad social connections Strive for himself and his family not to be inferior to others
PHYSICAL STRENGTH		
Have strong sexual ability Be proactive and leading during sexual activities Have rich sexual experience Never engage in sexual activities with other men Proactively approach women and always be generous and protective towards women Able to drink alcohol well Be willing to use power when needed to protect his honour	Have strong sexual ability Be proactive and leading during sexual activities Have rich sexual experience Never engage in sexual activities with other men Able to drink alcohol well	Have strong sexual ability Be proactive and leading during sexual activities Have rich sexual experience Never engage in sexual activities with other men Proactively approach women and always be generous and protective towards women Be willing to use power when needed to protect his honour
DUTIES TO THE FAMILY		
Be the family's pillar Earn enough money to provide for his wife and children Get married and have children Be responsible for ancestor worshipping	Be the family's pillar Earn enough money to provide for his wife and children Get married and have children Be responsible for ancestor worshipping	Be the family's pillar Earn enough money to provide for his wife and children Get married and have children Be responsible for ancestor worshipping

The results of factor analysis by urban and rural variables presented in Table 3.3.10 show that there is not much difference in the concept of true man between urban men and rural men. And perhaps that is the important finding of this study highlighting the universality of norms and stereotypes of masculinity in Vietnam. Specifically, in the two domains “Career” and “Duties to the family,” the place of residence does not have any influence on men’s conception of true man.

In the remaining domains, there are some difference but not significant. For example, in the domain of Capacity and Personality, the true man of urban men must “have a strong body” and

“strong and decisive mannerism” and the true man in rural area must “proactively approach women and always be generous and protective towards women.”

In terms of Physical strength, rural men think that men must be “able to drink alcohol well” but urban men disagree with that idea. In contrast, rural men do not consider that “be willing to use power when needed to protect one’s honor” are true man’s criteria while urban men thought this criteria was important. Rural men also believe that “proactively approach women and always be generous and protective towards women” should not belong to the domain of Physical strength but it should be a trait of personality.

Qualitative study provides numerous excellent examples that help to illustrate the survey results. The story of Bao featured in Box 3.3.4 below is a typical example for the millennial generation in urban settings. Oxford dictionary describes the millennial generation as ‘those who enter their youth in the beginning years of the 21st century.’¹⁴⁵ PEW research center defines millennial generation as those born in 1981 – 1996 when enormous political, economic, and social changes took place such as September 11 terrorist attacks, the Great Recession, and the Internet explosion,¹⁴⁶ followed by the birth of Facebook, YouTube, and Tweeter. In Vietnam, 1986 marked the beginning of a unique and robust economic, politic, social, and cultural transformation. Millennials enjoy the fruits of development and globalisation. Many people of this generation grew up in middle-income families, a rapidly growing class in Vietnam which will increase from 15% total population at present days to 20% or 25% in the coming years.¹⁴⁷ They grew up not facing poverty, with parents who have progressive ideas, being sent to study abroad. Young people like Bao are not few in the big cities in Vietnam today. They are still torn between traditional norms and new ideas but they are well aware of that and are trying to get out. They are less confined within the frame of traditional masculine stereotypes, their thinking of the “true man” is simpler, just as the result of the multivariate regression analysis above. Their thinking about life tends to be simpler but quite pragmatic. Their attitudes towards marriage, families about women, and gender equality are shifting toward more positive one.

145 OxfordDictionaries.com. describes a millennial as “a person reaching young adulthood in the early 21st century.” The Pew Research Center defines millennials as born from 1981 to 1996, choosing these dates for “key political, economic and social factors”, including the September 11th terrorist attacks, the Great Recession, and the Internet explosion.

146 “Millennials Cheer New Zealand Lawmaker’s ‘OK, Boomer’ Remark,” Reuters, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-newzealand-millennials/millennials-cheer-new-zealand-lawmakers-ok-boomer-remark-idUSKBN1XG2YT>.

147 <https://news.zing.vn/thu-tuong-tang-lop-trung-luu-viet-nam-ngay-cang-nhieu-la-dang-mung-post1034714.html>

BOX 3.3.3: “Staying somewhere for too long makes it difficult to grow” –A story of the millennial generation

Bao, 23 years old, is currently a last-year student abroad and having a summer vacation back in Vietnam. Bao’s family is living in Hanoi.

Childhood

Bao is the only child in the family. Both his parents have a government job. Important activities in the family such as investing in real estate or purchasing expensive items are discussed between his parents but the one with the final decision is always his father. Bao’s father is responsible for supervising his study while his mother takes care of cooking and other domestic activities. Since a young age, Bao has often heard adults saying that boys are not allowed to cry even if he falls or gets hurt. Bao believes these have affected his mental health as he cannot express his emotions but have to suppress them. Bao was often told that men have to know how to earn money, or if he does not study well he would not be able to make money and become poor and cannot get married. Therefore, Bao has always afraid and only focused on his school study while neglected social skills. Bao is quite shy, does not know how to socialise, and has little idea on how to ‘get a girlfriend’.

Study abroad

Bao went to Japan to study at the age of 18. Even though his family is wealthy, during his study abroad, Bao still works part-time for 10 hours a week. Despite being the only child, Bao does not feel any pressure as his parents do not force anything on him but only advise him to study to his best ability.

Pressure and other issues in life

The biggest pressure at the moment for Bao is his career and personal relationship. The thing that Bao is worried most about is that he cannot find a girlfriend. In every family gathering, Bao feels a great pressure because all of his male cousins are married or have a girlfriend while he is the only single one. This has made Bao sad as he thinks that he is incapable.

Most of Bao’s friends in Vietnam are always scared of not having enough money. A number of them did not go to university and do not hold stable jobs. Some others went to university but cannot find suitable jobs so they often switch jobs and do not earn a decent salary. Those who also go to study in Japan only care about how to stay in Japan. Bao does not want to stay in Japan, however, as he thinks he has more opportunities in Vietnam.

Thoughts on men and masculinity

Bao said: “In Vietnam, men with money are kings. It sounds funny but without money you cannot do anything and you are no one. Nowadays to have a girlfriend you need money, to get married you need money. There is no such thing as love conquers all anymore. Nowadays at least if you are heart-broken you need to be heart-broken in a Ferrari. Not only that, to have polite and delicate mannerism is also one important point. A man also needs to have strong sexual ability. Regarding look he only needs to be alright-looking.”

For Bao, true men are those who live simply in their daily living and thoughts. They are the men with money and can invest but do not waste money and know to save. Also, true men need to care about

and share with their wife and children, take care of their family. No matter how much money they make, they still go home and have dinner with their wife. Bao wishes to become a man like that. He said “I am not there yet but I am trying”.

Bao thinks that Vietnamese men have some positive qualities such as they are hard-working in both study and work and open-minded to new things. Many Vietnamese students abroad study and work very hard and always strive to learn new things. They also know how to enjoy life but in a reasonable way. They can go drinking in bars but never go overboard, they do not fight and go home at the right time. But Bao said he cannot count much on his friends in Vietnam. “They drink beer like water then they act indecently and touch other girls. I am not saying that Vietnam is bad, but what I mean is if you stay somewhere for too long, it is hard to grow”.

Bao finds Japanese men very different to Vietnamese men. “Japanese men are also very dominating but in the ways that once they are married the wife would have to listen to the husband’s decision, however in the case of Vietnamese men if the wife does not listen, they will use violence. I think violence in Vietnam is more common than abroad. Maybe it is because of the lack of strict punishment and because of tolerant social norms. Maybe they think because they are men, they have more power and rights so they can use violence if others do not listen to them.”

Bao thinks that men in the past and men nowadays are different but not much. “Nowadays, instead of making all decisions, men also ask for their wife’s opinions, even if they end up doing something completely different, they still ask. It is different, yet not much.”

But a true man will discuss properly with his wife. Buying a motorbike may be not very important, but to purchase land, house, or stocks requires the agreement of both husband and wife. Husband and wife are companions, they are each other’s half.

Thoughts on marriage and family

For Bao, family is the most important. Men are physically stronger than women so they have to be proactive in taking care of big things so that women can do less heavy work. However, Bao said if cannot earn as much as his wife, he is willing to stay home and cook.

In the past, men had to get married and have children at a certain age and had to earn money to provide for his family. Nowadays life is easier and people have more freedom. Bao thinks it is not too crucial to have children, one can also just raise a dog and have that companionship. Without children one can still live normally, but old age could be a bit sad. But if to have a child, Bao would prefer a daughter because daughters are more affectionate and they have better manner. If to have two children, Bao would like to have a son first and then a daughter because the son will grow up to protect his younger sister.

Are men better leaders than women?

Bao totally disagreed with this perception. He has met many talented female leaders. Men as leaders are always very strict and stern, a female leader can still be stern but does not give such a pressure on others. Female leaders are often gentler than men. “My father is also a boss and in his workplace all leaders are men. When discussing work they are very aggressive. I only meet female leaders while I am abroad. They are very gentle, if they know that they are wrong, they will immediately apologise.”



Are men better than women at technology?

"I surely disagree with that. I myself am terrible at using computer. Every time my laptop breaks, I have to ask my female friend to fix it for me. She is excellent at fixing computer and coding. I believe there must be millions of girls like her in the world."

It is more difficult for men to control their sexual desire as theirs is stronger than women's?

"I also completely disagree with this statement. I know that women's sexual desire is always stronger than men's but they are better at controlling that. Maybe because the parents and society teach the women that their body is precious and they cannot let just anyone do anything to them, they have to be selective. Men do not care, they do whatever they want. This norm has been deeply rooted in many people until today. Many men also have affairs outside of their marriage because of sex. I do not agree with this at all so I really hate the men who do that."

Married women should prioritise their family and children over career?

"I do not agree. This has to be the case for both husband and wife. After marriage, men also have to be like that, not only women. For a family to be happy, both need to balance work and family. I do not like that men work while women stay at home or the other way around. Everyone shares the load and they will know how hard it is so that they can be more understanding towards each other."

Professionally successful women find it hard to take care of their family properly?

"I disagree. They are successful meaning that they have invested time. My mother, for example, holds a high position, earns a lot of money, but she still cooks at home and takes care of me very well. Having a good career does not mean neglecting family."

It is hard for a family to be happy if the wife is more competent than the husband?

I am not too sure about this. I have seen families with wife being more competent than husband and they find it hard to communicate with each other. My friend is married and his parents are quite conservative so they told him not to let his wife take control because it is not traditional. Basically both need to compromise and have tolerance towards each other. The key is to share, not about who is better.

Thoughts on women and gender equality

Bao thinks his female friends who were born in the period of 1997 – 1999 were experiencing the transition from the old to the new in Vietnam. Bao said some of his friends "had very good education and wealthy family but after getting married also just stayed at home to take care of their children, were abused by their husband and not able to speak up, not able to fight back". Some others did not study much but jumped into the market early and now ended up selling cheap things online.

Gender equality is an equity in all things such as work, income, in the family, in social norms on men and women. For example, when hanging out together, women can also pay, now the men still have to pay. Gender equality needs to start from the smallest things.

It is more equal nowadays than before. Men know to respect women better. While women used to have to obey the men back in the day, now women can have their own opinions. Perhaps some people know about gender equality and are aware that it is a big thing.



Bao believes: “There are many talented women nowadays and that gives men pressure. Like you are the best student in your class but now there is someone else better than you and your class does not look up to you anymore. I think men feel the same. They are used to be the leading ones and now they are afraid of changes. I myself does not feel more pressure though. If they are better than me, I do not mind losing.”

Education can change the people’s perception on gender equality. If men are willing to take in knowledge on gender equality, it can be done. However it seems unsure that they are ready and want to change. “They are kings and spoilt, now suddenly there is a new king so they do not want to share the throne.” Therefore changes need to start with the new generations. They need to be taught on what is right from childhood. In the future, Vietnam may develop economically and in other aspects, but gender equality will take a long time.

Despite the popularity of the notion of “true man” among surveyed men, there is some variation of norms of masculinity. This is Bien (not his real name), a participant of qualitative study, one who claimed to be transgender. From a young age, Bien wanted to become a woman but never really revealed his gender identity. However, during the interview, Bien shared his thoughts on Vietnamese men and found that the traditional masculinity pattern has not changed. However, Bien believes that ‘authentic or true’ means to live as you want to, not as others want you to be. Box 3.3.4 below extracts some of Bien’s thoughts.

BOX 3.3.4: **A variation of a ‘true man’ – dare to live a life one wants**

Bien is 25 years old and living in Ho Chi Minh city. Bien is currently studying in a university. At the time of this study, Bien had not yet come out but self-identified as a female transgender.

When discussing about the concept of a ‘true man’ in the contemporary Vietnamese society, Bien said that the stereotype about a true man has not changed:

In my opinion, until now the stereotype (of a true man) has not changed. A man has to be strong, has to have a stable job, has to be successful and if he has a good family, a good wife, happy family then people will admire him and like him.

Yet, personally, Bien believed a ‘true man’ is the one who dares to live a life exactly how he wants to instead of conform himself into a common norm:

For me, a ‘true man’ is not about his job, or his look, or his success. For me a [true] man is a morally good person, dares to live the way he wants to, not conform to the common norms. Why do we have to conform to the common norms like that?

3.4. Internalised Gender Norms and Stereotypes

This chapter presents the findings of the research survey and the qualitative study on the internalisation of gender norms that are reflected through men's thought of what are essential qualities for men and women, what makes a successful man and woman, expectation for sons and daughters and well as expectations for women and men in general. Each topic was examined through a set of questions. The survey results show that independent variables such as age, place of residence, employment / occupation do not have much influence on men's perceptions of women and men in general. Therefore, in this section we present only the results of the general analysis and those results showing the differences. Very subtle differences can be detected through qualitative research.

3.4.1. Essential qualities for men and women

In order to better understand men's expectations towards men and how men internalised these expectations, the respondents were requested to review a list of 15 qualities of men and women – among which 14 were often mentioned in the society and one was of their own addition. The respondents, then, were asked to choose the five qualities that they considered to be the most important to Vietnamese men and Vietnamese women nowadays and to rank them from first to third with first being the most important quality.

Table 3.4.1 compares the rates of selecting the most essential qualities of men and women. Besides 'filial piety' and 'faithfulness' – the two most selected qualities for both men and women, a distinct difference can be seen between the qualities expected from men and those expected from women. The commonly selected qualities for men are 'honesty', 'strength', and 'decisiveness', while for women they are 'kind-heartedness', 'gentleness', and 'capability'.

TABLE 3.4.1. **The rate of selecting the most essential qualities for men and women**

		For men	For women
1	Gentleness	7.21	45.15
2	Kind-heartedness	22.36	47.45
3	Filial piety	44.10	57.93
4	Honesty	48.89	28.87
5	Patience/ Tolerance	18.19	10.95
6	Capability	8.45	37.59
7	Generosity	8.26	1.40
8	Self-sacrifice	16.71	12.78
9	Faithfulness	35.92	47.18
10	Strength	37.59	4.64
11	Decisiveness	35.88	3.54
12	Ambition	8.92	0.55
13	Adventure	2.38	0.08
14	Politeness	4.95	1.75
15	Others	0.02	0.00

Table 3.4.2 features the ranking order of most essential qualities. For men, ‘filial piety’, ‘honesty’, ‘strength’ and faithfulness’ and ‘kind-heartedness’ are the five most selected qualities as most essential. For women, ‘gentleness’, ‘filial piety’ ‘faithfulness’ ‘kind-heartedness’ and ‘honesty.’

TABLE 3.4.2. **The rate of selecting the most essential qualities for men and women in ranking**

		For men			For women		
		Ranked first	Ranked second	Ranked third	Ranked first	Ranked second	Ranked third
1	Gentleness	3.51	1.25	2.45	21.35	9.86	13.95
2	Kind-heartedness	9.27	7.44	5.61	16.13	20.02	11.26
3	Filial piety	22.98	14.06	7.05	21.78	22.05	14.10
4	Honesty	21.62	15.19	12.04	7.95	9.93	10.99
5	Patience/ Tolerance	5.10	7.13	5.96	1.95	3.66	5.30
6	Capability	2.22	3.12	3.08	10.1	13.79	13.79
7	Generosity	1.79	2.77	3.70	0.12	0.70	0.58
8	Self-sacrifice	3.23	6.00	7.28	1.83	4.40	6.47
9	Faithfulness	9.62	13.67	12.62	17.22	12.66	17.30
10	Strength	9.82	14.02	13.71	0.66	1.09	2.77
11	Decisiveness	7.64	11.26	16.87	0.27	1.05	2.18
12	Ambition	1.68	2.45	4.64	0.08	0.08	0.35
13	Adventure	0.39	0.70	1.29	0.04	0.00	0.04
14	Politeness	0.62	0.86	3.43	0.47	0.51	0.74
15	Others	0.51	0.08	0.27	0.16	0.19	0.19

Education seems to have some influence on the men’s expectation towards women’s and men’s personality. The two middle educational groups namely secondary school and high school graduates tend to emphasise on the traditional qualities of men and women more than the other lower and higher educational groups.

TABLE 3.4.3. **Perception of respondents towards the most essential qualities of men disaggregated by educational attainment , (%)**

		Never went to school	Primary school	Secondary school	High school	Technical school/ College	University and higher	Total	N
		1	Gentleness	3.24	16.76	48.11	20.54	3.24	8.11
2	Kind-heartedness	1.57	14.98	39.72	29.44	5.05	9.23	100.00	574
3	Filial piety	1.77	11.40	33.66	32.60	8.22	12.37	100.00	1132
4	Honesty	1.20	9.88	36.65	33.47	7.81	11.00	100.00	1255
5	Patience/ Tolerance	1.28	8.35	30.62	37.47	8.57	13.70	100.00	467
6	Capability	2.30	14.29	39.63	27.65	10.14	5.99	100.00	217
7	Generosity	0.94	9.91	34.91	30.66	11.79	11.79	100.00	212
8	Self-sacrifice	1.63	8.86	35.66	35.90	8.39	9.56	100.00	429
9	Faithfulness	1.19	12.47	33.62	33.51	8.13	11.06	100.00	922
10	Strength	1.45	10.57	35.13	32.33	7.77	12.75	100.00	922
11	Decisiveness	1.41	7.60	30.73	32.90	10.64	16.72	100.00	921
12	Ambition	2.18	9.17	26.64	28.82	13.97	19.21	100.00	229
13	Adventure	1.64	13.11	27.87	39.34	8.20	9.84	100.00	61
14	Politeness	1.57	9.45	37.80	31.50	3.15	16.54	100.00	127
15	Others	50.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	50.00	0.00	100.00	2
N		39	276	891	835	213	313		2567

TABLE 3.4.4. Perception of respondents towards the most essential qualities of women disaggregated by educational attainment (%)

		Never went to school	Primary school	Secondary school	High school	Technical school/ College	University and higher	Total	N
1	Gentleness	1.55	12.42	36.15	31.75	8.20	9.92	100.00	1159
2	Kind-heartedness	1.48	10.10	35.96	30.71	8.46	13.30	100.00	1218
3	Filial piety	1.68	10.83	35.44	32.95	7.60	11.50	100.00	1487
4	Honesty	0.67	9.58	34.68	35.22	6.61	13.23	100.00	741
5	Patience/ Tolerance	1.07	9.25	38.79	36.30	5.34	9.25	100.00	281
6	Capability	2.28	11.09	33.26	30.26	9.95	13.16	100.00	965
7	Generosity	0.00	19.44	30.56	27.78	11.11	11.11	100.00	36
8	Self-sacrifice	2.44	10.67	31.10	32.93	10.37	12.50	100.00	328
9	Faithfulness	1.32	10.24	33.20	34.19	8.51	12.55	100.00	1211
10	Strength	0.84	15.13	36.97	26.89	5.88	14.29	100.00	119
11	Decisiveness	1.10	8.79	24.18	35.16	13.19	17.58	100.00	91
12	Ambition	0.00	0.00	42.86	28.57	7.14	21.43	100.00	14
13	Adventure	0.00	50.00	0.00	50.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	2
14	Politeness	0.00	6.67	28.89	35.56	15.56	13.33	100.00	45
15	Others	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	0
N		39	276	891	835	213	313		2567

To conclude, some expected qualities are shared between men and women. According to table 3.4.5, however, the difference between the two genders lies in the ranking order of said qualities, or in other words, in the popularity of these qualities in each gender group. For men, the ranking of these qualities reveals their role as the pillar with decisions while the ranking for women highlights their caring role. The difference between the rural-urban populations or age groups is not significant, which shows the commonness of these expectations towards both men and women in the Vietnamese society. Nevertheless, education appears to have certain influence on the expectation of men towards the qualities of men and women. Those who have finished secondary school and high school have the tendency to prioritise traditional gender norms more than the other lower and higher educational groups.

TABLE 3.4.5. Essential qualities for men and women ranked by how many times they were selected by respondents

Ranking	For men	Ranking	For women
1	Honesty	1	Filial piety
2	Filial piety	2	Kind-heartedness
3	Strength	3	Faithfulness
4	Faithfulness	4	Gentleness
5	Decisiveness	5	Capability
6	Kind-heartedness	6	Honesty
7	Patience/ Tolerance	7	Self-sacrifice
8	Self-sacrifice	8	Patience/ Tolerance
9	Ambition	9	Strength
10	Capability	10	Decisiveness

The analysis of other demographic variables show that there is no significant difference among age groups or male groups in urban and rural areas. It means that, Vietnamese men generally have the same standard norms for essential qualities for men and women.

3.4.2. A successful man and a successful woman

To understand the respondents' perceptions of a successful man and a successful woman, we asked participants to select three factors considered to be the most important among the list of 13 factors for success for a man and for a woman and then ranked by the level of importance from one to three, with one if most important. Interestingly, the survey results are quite consistent with qualitative research. Table 3.4.6 shows that "happy family", "high income", "good personality", "good health", "broad social network" and "contributions to society" are the most selected factors for both men and women.

However, there are significant differences between two genders. For men, factors such as "high income" and "broad social network" were selected more often than that for women, especially "income" with a selection rate of 72.38%, 1.43 times higher than the rate of 50.45% for women. Similarly, the rate of selecting "high status", and "having power" for men is twice as high or more than that for women. "Broad social network" is also considered to be more important to the success of men than of women.

For women, "happy family" is considered the most important factor and was selected by 89.17% of male respondents, significantly higher than the rate of 80.64% of those who selected this factor for men. This is followed by "good personality", "good health" and "contribution to society". The proportion of those factors selected for women's success is higher than the rate of those who selecting them for men.

TABLE 3.4.6. **The rate of selecting the factors that make the success of men and women (%)**

Factors that make success		For men	For women
1	High income	72.38	50.45
2	High social status	37.79	19.28
3	Having power	32.14	14.45
4	Happy family	80.64	89.17
5	Having a son	11.84	16.63
6	Strong sexual competence	3.43	3.04
7	Broad social network	42.77	36.74
8	Good personality	58.86	74.56
9	Contribution to community	43.94	49.90
10	Good health	58.01	72.30
11	Good look	4.13	13.71
12	High education	13.91	11.88
13	Knowledge	40.16	47.88

In Table 3.4.7, when comparing between rural and urban areas, there is almost no significant difference in term of factors that make a man successful, except for a small gap in the “having a son”. For women, there is a difference but not too large between rural and urban areas in terms of “high income”, “high social status”, “having a son”, and “having good personality”. This demonstrates the commonness of social expectations for Vietnamese men and women.

TABLE 3.4.7. Rural - urban comparison

Factors that make success	For men (% agree)		For women (% agree)	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
1 High income	72.16	72.59	48.34	52.50
2 High social status	37.85	37.72	17.82	20.71
3 Having power	32.89	31.41	14.20	14.70
4 Happy family	80.99	80.29	89.27	89.07
5 Having a son	10.09	13.55	14.51	18.71
6 Strong sexual competence	3.71	3.16	3.08	3.00
7 Broad social network	41.32	44.19	36.36	37.11
8 Good personality	58.91	58.81	71.75	77.44
9 Contribution to community	43.30	44.57	49.05	50.73
10 Good health	57.65	58.35	72.87	71.75
11 Good look	4.57	3.70	16.64	10.85
12 High education	14.59	13.24	11.91	11.86
13 knowledge	41.96	38.41	48.50	47.27



Comparisons across other variables such as province, age, education, etc. also show similar results. This confirms the commonness of social expectations for men and for women in general.

Table 3.4.8 presents the ranking order of the factors that selected as important to make the success of men and women. For men, the most important factor in the No. 1 ranking is “high income”, followed by “happy family” and then “good health”. For women, these are still the three factors mentioned above, but the order is different, whereby “happy family ranks first, the second is “high income” and the third is “good health”.

TABLE 3.4.8. The three most important factors that make men and women to be successful by order and rate of selection

Factors that make success	For men (% agree)			For women (% agree)		
	Rank of importance			1 st	2 nd	3 rd
	1 st important	2 nd important	3 rd important	important	important	important
1 High income	31.55	14.10	9.93	16.98	9.39	7.28
2 High social status	6.74	14.41	6.97	2.96	7.17	3.86
3 Having power	3.74	7.75	11.14	1.68	3.31	4.29
4 Happy family	28.63	22.56	13.67	45.03	21.08	11.22
5 Having a son	0.74	2.30	2.77	1.05	4.44	3.86
6 Strong sexual competence	0.19	0.55	0.58	0.16	0.35	0.93
7 Broad social network	1.75	5.92	11.34	1.71	7.36	9.08
8 Good personality	6.43	13.13	17.37	9.47	21.66	21.89
9 Contribution to community	1.52	4.52	7.67	0.86	4.21	11.49
10 Good health	12.78	8.26	10.56	14.26	13.91	15.39
11 Good looking	0.12	0.31	0.58	0.58	1.13	1.56
12 High education	0.82	1.68	1.95	0.66	1.29	1.48
13 Knowledge	4.99	4.52	5.45	4.6	4.71	7.67

In terms of factors making a man successful, rural men have a slightly higher rate of selecting the three above mentioned factors than that of urban men, but the difference is not so significant, especially the factor of “good health”. However, when comparing across provinces, among those who selected “high income” as the most important factor, men from Khanh Hoa ranked the highest, accounting for 39.92%, followed by Ho Chi Minh City, 35.21%, next is Hoa Binh, 29.77% and finally Hanoi, 20.38%. On the contrary, among those who select “happy family” in the first place, Hanoi ranked the highest with 35.19%, the second was Hoa Binh 31.58%, the third was Ho Chi Minh City 26.58%. and finally Khanh Hoa, 21.32%. Regarding the factor of “good health” Ha Noi has a higher selection rate than the other three localities with the same pace.

Comparisons between age groups show no significant difference. Though the three middle age groups tended to consider “high income” as the most important factor of success than the youngest group, 18-29 years old, and the oldest group, 60 years and older. The same trend happens with “happy family” and “good health.” This may be related to the fact that men in these

three groups are in the middle of their life when most have family with growing children and when the need of the family is largest. While many men in the youngest group are unmarried or just start their family and the oldest group have their family already established for years and most of them have their children are grown-up.

Regarding the most important factors of success for women, the two factors “happy family”, “high income” have a slightly higher rate of selection among rural respondents but the factors of “good personality” and “good health” have slightly lower rate than that among urban respondents, but the difference is not significant. Compared across provinces, Ho Chi Minh City had the highest rate of selection of “high income” with 38.76% of the respondents, the second was Khanh Hoa, 28.67%, the third was Hoa Binh, 20.41% and the last was Hanoi, 12.16%. The factor of “family happiness” was more likely to be selected in Ho Chi Minh City with 30.62% of the respondents, then was Hoa Binh, 25.17%, the third was Hanoi, 24.31% and finally Khanh Hoa, 19.90%. “Good health” has the most selected rate in Hoa Binh, 31.69%, second is Hanoi, 29.78%, third is Ho Chi Minh City, 27.60% and finally Khanh Hoa, 10.93%.

TABLE 3.4.9. Factors that make the success of men and women in the order ranked by rate of selection

Order	For men	Order	For women
1	Happy family	1	Happy family
2	High income	2	Good personality
3	Good personality	3	Good health
4	Good health	4	High income
5	Contribution to community	5	Contribution to community
6	Broad social network	6	Intelligent
7	Intelligent	7	Broad social network
8	High social status	8	High social status
9	Having power	9	Having son
10	High education	10	Having power
11	Having son	11	Good looking
12	Good looking	12	Good education
13	High sexual competence	13	High sexual competence

In focus group discussions before and during the survey and in-depth interviews, the theme of successful man emerged and became very attractive to many participants. In general, both men and women agreed that successful men must have a good career or a stable job, a happy family and have good reputation or high social status.

For example, below is comment of a young man in Ha Noi:

I think [a successful man] is a person with a good career, is respected by people around, is successful in his work, and has a happy family.

Man, 30 years old, Ha Noi.

Participants in focus group discussions in Hanoi emphasized the balance of three factors: money, career, and family:

A successful man in Vietnam has to balance three things: money, social status, and family relationships. If a man can balance those three things, he will be a great man. In short, three important things for a Vietnamese man are money, social status and family.

Mixed gender focus group discussion, Hanoi.

Generally speaking, there must be a career that helps to maintain a stable life ... a career that brings money. The old people said having a large rice field is not equal to have a good job. A good job means a career, that is the most important thing that brings wealth ... the man having no job would be a failure...

Mixed gender FGD, Ho Chi Minh City

According to female participants, the success of a man in Vietnamese society is judged by whether he can assume the role of breadwinner in the family. That requires him to have a good job which bring good income:

Men are the breadwinner of the family. As being breadwinner of the family, his responsibility will be very heavy, requiring him to have a job which is able to cover other family members. In order to have such a job, his career must be relatively good.

Men FGD, Ho Chi Minh City

For rural men, a successful man is someone who can take care of his family and do good business:

First of all, I have to take care of my family, my wife, my children, and I must be economically succesful. As for society, I have to participate in the social activities and contribute to the local community

Man, 54 years old, Khanh Hoa.

In my opinion, a successful man is the one who provides complete care for his own family. First of all, you have to maintain stable life in your family. The second is economic assurance.

Man, 32 years old, Hoa Binh

For young people in urban areas, the ability to take care of their families is thought as an important indicator of success. But for this generation, that can only be achieved with professional competence, an important factor for a good job with a high income. It is also worth noting that young people emphasize the balance between home and work:

Having good professional qualifications, good jobs and earning a lot of money. Generally speaking, good at work, able to take care of the family. Taking care of the family here means caring, being attentive [to your wife and children]. Do not working day and night. It is meaningless that you bring home lots of money but neglect your wife and children.

Man, 28 years old, Ha Noi.

In summary, although there are some commonalities, the difference in the perceptions of the success of men and women is significant. Factors that make men's success more closely linked to their economic role as breadwinner in the family, while women's success factors emphasize their caring role. Notably, for both men and women, "happy family" is the most important indicator of success. This once again confirms the universal value of the family in Vietnamese society.

3.4.3. Gender norms and expectations

To gain insights into the men's perception gender norms and expectations, we applied a scale consisting of 23 questions about women and men, among which 12 questions were to measure men's perception on women and 11 questions were to measure men's perception on men in relation with women. The respondents were to select whether or not they agree or disagree with the listed statements.

The percentages and factor analysis demonstrate the high prevalence of women stereotypes in the perceptions of male participants in the research, which reflects the traditional gender expectations on the role, value, capability, and expectation for women in private relationships, family, and society from men's perspective.

Regarding employment/ career: stereotypes of women's capability in work are very common in the majority of men with a rate of 84.38% agreeing to 'Women should do simple and easy work', and 82.66% of men agreeing to the extremely biased statement of 'Women should prioritise taking care of family over striving for career'.

Family and emotional relationship is the area where traditional gender stereotypes are most common. The three statements that were agreed to by almost all men are ‘Men need to be the shoulders protecting their women’ (97.47%), ‘Men doing housework is to help women’ (94.97%), and ‘Taking care of family is a woman’s heavenly given duty’ (92.75%). Other statements indicating the caretaker role of women such as sacrificing, tolerance, obedience and dependence also received high agreement rates. (see table 3.4.10)

In sexual life, the three statements that were most agreed to are on men’s sexuality, including ‘It is harder for men than women to control sexual desire’ and ‘Men have stronger sexual desire than women’ (with agreement rates of 78.69% and 71.56% respectively) and ‘It is normal for men to flirt with women’ (63.93%). Up to 47.45% male respondents agreed to the statement blaming women for sexual harassment or sexual abuse ‘A woman must do something for her to be sexually harassed/ abused’. The double standards in sexuality are clearly reflected in the 52.79% men agreeing to the statement of ‘It is normal for men to have multiple sexual partners’ in comparison to only 26.8% agreeing to ‘It is normal for women to have multiple sexual partners’. Likewise, 27.62% were in favour of the statement ‘It is understandable and acceptable for men to have affairs outside of marriage’ compared to only less than half of that at 12.74% agreeing to ‘It is understandable and acceptable for women to have affairs outside of marriage. (See table 3.4.10).

TABLE 3.4.10. **Gender norms and expectations, (N=2,567)**

	AGREE (%)
In Employment	
1 Women should do simple and easy work	84.38
2 Women should prioritise taking care of family over striving for career	82.66
3 Women are often emotional and inconsistent in work	68.41
4 Men are better leaders than women	68.13
5 Men are better at politics than women	66.69
6 Women are incapable of working under high pressure	64.51
7 Men work better than women	64.16
In relationships and family	
8 Men are the shoulders protecting their women	97.47
9 Men doing housework is to help women	94.97
10 A woman’s heavenly given role is to take care of family and be a strong support for her husband’s career growth	92.75
11 Women should tolerate and sacrifice to keep the family happy	82.66
12 Once married, a woman needs to dedicate fully to her husband’s family	72.65
13 Husband/ boyfriend should be the one with the final decision	68.37
14 Wife/ girlfriend should not look too outstanding so as to not attract attention from other men	60.97
In sexual life	
15 It is harder for men than women to control sexual desire	78.69
16 Men have stronger sexual desire than women	71.56
17 It is normal for men to flirt with women	63.93
18 Wife/girlfriend should satisfy her husband/boyfriend if he wants to have sex	58.67
19 It is normal for men to have multiple sexual partners	52.79
20 A woman must have done something for her to be sexually harassed/ abused	47.45
21 It is understandable and acceptable for a man to have affairs outside of marriage	27.62
22 It is normal for women to have multiple sexual partners	26.84
23 It is understandable and acceptable for women to have affairs outside of marriage	12.74

These findings are consistent with those in the study ‘Social determinants of gender inequality in Vietnam’ published by ISDS in 2015¹⁴⁸. It can be seen that there is a high proportion of men studied agreeing to these extremely biased stereotypes, and therefore there is an urgent need for creative awareness raising campaigns to shift the deeply rooted traditional gender stereotypes in the modern men’s perception. These stereotypes are still the barriers hindering the opportunities and rights of women to develop fully and to be equal with men in employment, family, and relationships.

Disaggregation by age and area shows distinct difference between the youngest group and the other older groups as well as between urban and rural men. Overall, although the traditional gender norms are still common among Vietnamese men, there is a positive shift in the perceptions of young men and urban men. Table 3.4.11. indicates that in all three aspects of employment, emotional relationship and family and sexual life, the younger the man, the less biased he is against women and the less influenced he is by gender norms. In contrast, the older the man, the more likely he is supportive of the traditional stereotypes. Moreover, rural men seem to be more affected by conventional gender norms than urban men. For example, regarding employment, around 75% men of 18-29 age group agreed to the statement “Women should prioritize taking care of family over striving for career” while up to 85.78% 50-59 men and 86.1% men over 60 supported that statement; besides, around 81% urban men upheld that stereotype while over 84% rural men supported it. A similar pattern is observed for the statement “Women should do simple and easy work”. In terms of relationships and family, we can see that the statement “Women should tolerate and sacrifice to keep the family happy” showed a significant disparity among the age groups as well as between rural and urban areas. There are nearly 68% young men (18-29) agreeing to the statement while the agreement rate increases as the age increases, reaching nearly 90% for 50-59 and over-60 age groups. Approximately 80% urban men agreed to that norm while almost 85% rural men supported such opinion. For sexual life, we can also see some examples of the pattern: the percentages of men agreeing to the statements “It is normal for men to have multiple sexual partners” and “It is normal for men to flirt with women” tend to increase as the age increases; the rates of rural men agreeing to such statements are noticeably higher than the rates of urban men.

148 ISDS (2015). Những yếu tố quyết định bất bình đẳng giới ở Việt Nam. Hà Nội: Nhà xuất bản Hồng Đức.

TABLE 3.4.11. Agreement rate to statements on women and men disaggregated by age and area

		% AGREE, (N=2,567)						
		by AGE					by AREA	
		18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	Urban	Rural
In Employment								
1	Men work better than women	55.53	59.02	68.38	68.56	72.2	63.8	64.51
2	Women should do simple and easy work	81.49	82.46	87.35	86.57	82.24	81.94	86.76
3	Women should priorities taking care of family over striving for career	74.65	79.93	87.35	85.78	86.1	81.15	84.14
4	Men are better leaders than women	57.95	61.38	71.97	75.36	76.83	67.59	68.67
5	Women are often emotional and inconsistent in work	59.36	68.13	72.99	70.93	69.88	69.16	67.67
6	Women are incapable of working under high pressure	50.7	59.7	68.72	73.78	69.88	64.12	64.9
7	Men are better at politics than women	52.92	60.54	71.45	75.36	75.29	67.11	66.28
In relationships and family								
8	A woman's heavenly given role is to take care of family and be a strong support for her husband's career growth	89.13	91.23	94.7	95.1	93.05	92.11	93.38
9	Men doing housework is to help women	95.77	93.76	94.7	96.21	93.82	95.19	94.77
10	Women should tolerate and sacrifice to keep the family happy	68.61	79.6	87.18	89.73	89.19	80.6	84.68
11	Men are the shoulders for their women to rely on	97.18	97.13	97.95	97.63	97.3	97.16	97.77
12	Wife/ girlfriend should not look too outstanding so as to not attract attention from other men	56.34	54.97	65.64	64.61	64.09	60.96	60.97
13	Husband/ boyfriend should be the one who make the final decision	57.34	61.89	73.5	76.15	73.75	66.32	70.36
14	Once married, a woman needs to dedicate fully to her husband's family	56.54	69.14	77.61	81.36	79.15	70.35	74.9
In sexual life								
15	Men have stronger sexual desire than women	63.58	66.44	74.19	77.88	77.22	71.45	71.67
16	It is harder for men than women to control sexual desire	71.23	75.38	81.71	83.89	81.08	77.92	79.45
17	It is normal for men to have multiple sexual partners	46.68	46.71	56.24	58.61	56.37	49.21	56.27
18	It is normal for women to have multiple sexual partners	28.57	24.28	27.01	28.44	25.1	24.84	28.79
19	Wife/girlfriend should satisfy her husband/boyfriend if he wants to have sex	53.52	55.65	60	62.24	63.71	58.52	58.81
20	It is normal for men to flirt with women	54.73	60.37	68.72	69.51	65.25	61.04	66.74
21	It is understandable and acceptable for a man to have affairs outside of marriage	16.5	24.45	31.97	33.65	31.66	25.71	29.48
22	It is understandable and acceptable for women to have affairs outside of marriage	10.46	11.97	15.21	13.43	11.58	12.7	12.78
23	A woman must have done something for her to be sexually harassed/ abused	42.25	44.86	49.06	51.66	49.42	46.21	48.65

3.4.4. Analysis of gender norms and expectations using factor analysis

We have developed a scale to measure men's perception on women and on men themselves and used factor analysis to test the effectiveness of this scale. First, we selected the factors of the scale by applying 'eigen value'.¹⁴⁹ After identifying the 'factors', we used 'promax rotation' to find the correlation between 'items' and 'factors'. Items with loading factors at or higher than 0.3 will be kept.

3.4.4.1. Factor analysis of gender norms and expectations for women

In the scale on the expectations for women, the findings show three (3) identified factors (eigenvalue ≥ 0.98) and one question (item) with factor loading < 0.3 which was eliminated from the scale¹⁵⁰ (Table 3.4.12). Reliability of this scale is good (Cronbach's alpha = 0.843). Questions under each factor measure the items in the same domain. Given their meaning, we named them as: Domain 1: expectations for women's roles and duties; Domain 2: expectations women's capability and virtue, and Domain 3: expectations for women's sexuality and conduct (Table 3.4.12).

TABLE 3.4.12. **Factors and Factor loading on expectations for women**

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Roles and Duties			
1. A woman's heavenly given role is to take care of family and be a strong support for her husband's career growth	0.80		
2. Women should accept suffer and sacrifice to keep the family happy	0.77		
3. Women should prioritise taking care of family over striving for career	0.74		
4. Once married, a woman should dedicate fully to her husband's family	0.67		
5. Women should do simple and easy work	0.40		
6. Wife/ girlfriend should not look too outstanding so as to not attract attention from other men	0.35		
Capability and Virtue			
7. Women are often emotional and inconsistent in work		0.89	
8. Women are incapable of working under high pressure		0.80	
Sexuality and Conduct			
9. Wife/girlfriend should satisfy her husband/boyfriend if he wants to have sex			0.345
10. It is understandable and acceptable for women to have affairs outside of marriage			0.82
11. It is normal for women to have multiple sexual partners			0.81
12. A woman who is harassed or abused sexually must have done something wrong			0.47

149 Eigen values are most commonly reported in factor analyses. The eigen value for a given factor measures the variance in all the variables which is accounted for by that factor. The ratio of eigen values is the ratio of explanatory importance of the factors with respect to the variables. If a factor has a low eigen value, then it is contributing little to the explanation of variances in the variables and may be ignored as redundant with more important factors. Eigen values measure the amount of variation in the total sample accounted for by each factor.

150 Richard L Gorsuch, Factor Analysis (Hillsdale: Erlbaum, 1983).

According to the results of factor analysis summarized in Table 3.4.13 and Table 3.4.14, men’s perceptions about women varies across age groups and depends on where do they live.

TABLE 3.4.13. Factors and Factor loading on expectations for women by age

Total sample	18-29	30-39	50+
Roles & Duties			
A woman’s heavenly given role is to take care of family and be a strong support for her husband’s career growth	A woman’s heavenly given role is to take care of family and be a strong support for her husband’s career growth	A woman’s heavenly given role is to take care of family and be a strong support for her husband’s career growth	A woman’s heavenly given role is to take care of family and be a strong support for her husband’s career growth
Women should accept suffer and sacrifice to keep the family happy	Women should accept suffer and sacrifice to keep the family happy	Women should accept suffer and sacrifice to keep the family happy	Women should accept suffer and sacrifice to keep the family happy
Women should prioritise taking care of family over striving for career	Women should prioritise taking care of family over striving for career	Women should prioritise taking care of family over striving for career	Women should prioritise taking care of family over striving for career
Once married, a woman needs to dedicate fully to her husband’s family	Once married, a woman needs to dedicate fully to her husband’s family	Once married, a woman needs to dedicate fully to her husband’s family	Once married, a woman needs to dedicate fully to her husband’s family
Women should do simple and easy work	Women should do simple and easy work	Women should do simple and easy work	Women should do simple and easy work
Wife/ girlfriend should not dress up or make up too much to avoid attracting attention from other men	Wife/ girlfriend should not dress up or make up too much to avoid attracting attention from other men	Wife/ girlfriend should not dress up or make up too much to avoid attracting attention from other men	Wife/ girlfriend should not dress up or make up too much to avoid attracting attention from other men
		Wife/girlfriend should satisfy her husband/boyfriend if he wants to have sex	Wife/girlfriend should satisfy her husband/boyfriend if he wants to have sex
Capability and Virtue			
Women are often emotional and inconsistent in work	Women are often emotional and inconsistent in work	Women are often emotional and inconsistent in work	Women are often emotional and inconsistent in work
Women are incapable of working under high pressure	Women are incapable of working under high pressure	Women are incapable of working under high pressure	Women are incapable of working under high pressure
			A woman who is harassed or abused sexually must have done something wrong
			Wife/ girlfriend should not dress up or make up too much to avoid attracting attention from other men
Sexuality and Conduct			
Wife/girlfriend should satisfy her husband/boyfriend if he wants to have sex	Wife/girlfriend should satisfy her husband/boyfriend if he wants to have sex	Wife/girlfriend should satisfy her husband/boyfriend if he wants to have sex	Wife/girlfriend should satisfy her husband/boyfriend if he wants to have sex
It is understandable and acceptable for women to have affairs outside of marriage	It is understandable and acceptable for women to have affairs outside of marriage	It is understandable and acceptable for women to have affairs outside of marriage	It is NOT understandable and NOT acceptable for women to have affairs outside of marriage
It is normal for women to have multiple sexual partners	It is normal for women to have multiple sexual partners	It is normal for women to have multiple sexual partners	It is NOT normal for women to have multiple sexual partners
A woman who is harassed or abused sexually must have done something wrong	A woman who is harassed or abused sexually must have done something wrong	A woman who is harassed or abused sexually must have done something wrong	A woman who is harassed or abused sexually must have done something wrong

As shown in the Table 3.4.13, there is strong consistence in the thought of men of all age group regarding women’s role and duties. For men in the age groups of 30-39 and 50 and older, ‘satisfying husband’s or boyfriend’s sexual desire’ is also seen as a women’s duty. Men in all age groups blame women who are harassed or abused sexually but assign different meaning for this. For men in the age group of 50 and older, being harassed or abused sexually and getting attention of other men are seen as related to women’s virtue. For men in two younger age groups, being harassed or abused sexually is related to sexuality and conduct. While men in two younger age groups think “it is understandable and acceptable for women to have affairs outside of marriage” and “it is normal for women to have multiple sexual partners”, men in the age group of 50 and older cannot tolerate these conducts.

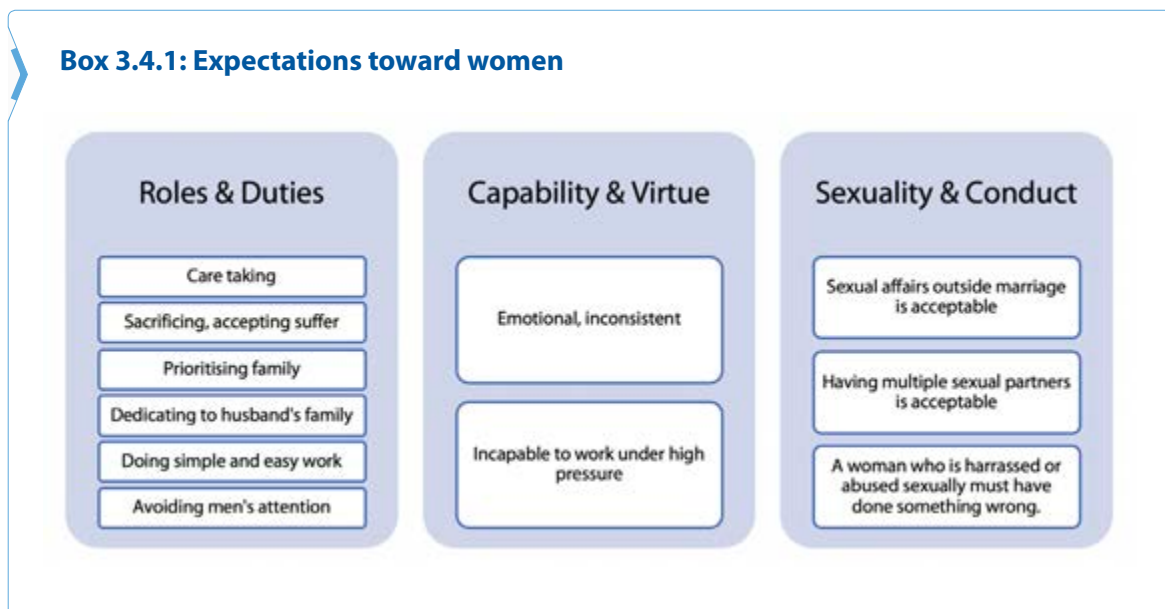
TABLE 3.4.14. **Factors and Factor loading on expectations for women by place of residence**

Total sample	Urban	Rural
Roles & Duties		
A woman’s heavenly given role is to take care of family and be a strong support for her husband’s career growth Women should accept suffer and sacrifice to keep the family happy Women should prioritise taking care of family over striving for career Once married, a woman needs to dedicate fully to her husband’s family Women should do simple and easy work Wife/ girlfriend should not dress up or make up too much to avoid attracting attention from other men	A woman’s heavenly given role is to take care of family and be a strong support for her husband’s career growth Women should accept suffer and sacrifice to keep the family happy Women should prioritise taking care of family over striving for career Once married, a woman needs to dedicate fully to her husband’s family Women should do simple and easy work Wife/ girlfriend should not dress up or make up too much to avoid attracting attention from other men Wife/girlfriend should satisfy her husband/boyfriend if he wants to have sex	A woman’s heavenly given role is to take care of family and be a strong support for her husband’s career growth Women should accept suffer and sacrifice to keep the family happy Women should prioritise taking care of family over striving for career Once married, a woman needs to dedicate fully to her husband’s family Women should do simple and easy work Wife/girlfriend should satisfy her husband/boyfriend if he wants to have sex
Capability and Virtue		
Women are often emotional and inconsistent in work Women are incapable of working under high pressure	Women are often emotional and inconsistent in work Women are incapable of working under high pressure	Women are often emotional and inconsistent in work Women are incapable of working under high pressure Wife/ girlfriend should not dress up or make up too much to avoid attracting attention from other men A woman who is harassed or abused sexually must have done something wrong
Sexuality and Conduct		
Wife/girlfriend should satisfy her husband/boyfriend if he wants to have sex It is understandable and acceptable for women to have affairs outside of marriage It is normal for women to have multiple sexual partners A woman who is harassed or abused sexually must have done something wrong	It is understandable and acceptable for women to have affairs outside of marriage It is normal for women to have multiple sexual partners A woman who is harassed or abused sexually must have done something wrong.	It is NOT understandable and NOT acceptable for women to have affairs outside of marriage It is NOT normal for women to have multiple sexual partners

As presented in the Table 3.4.14 above, while the norms about women might be categorized in different domains but there is strong consistence among men regardless their place of residence in term of their thought about women. For rural men, it is not women's having multiple sexual partners and having affairs outside of marriage is not acceptable.

Box 3.4.1 below visually summarises the results of factor analysis on men's perceptions about women's roles and duties, capability and virtues, and sexuality and conduct. In term of their roles and duties, women are expected to be care taker, sacrificing and accepting suffer to keep the family happy, prioritising family, dedicating to husband's family, satisfying husband's sexually, doing simple and easy work and being modest in the manner to avoid attention. In term of their capabilities and virtue, women are believed to be emotional inconsistent and incapable to work under high pressure. In term of their sexuality, it is normal if a woman has multiple sexual partners and it is understandable and acceptable if a woman has extramarital affairs. However, a woman who is harassed or abused sexually must have done something wrong.

The results are concerning as it shows the popularity and persistency of these expectation of women in the perception of Vietnamese men.



3.4.4.2. Factor analysis of gender norms and stereotypes of men

Regarding scale of men's perception on men (in relation to women), the findings of factor analysis show that there are four (4) identified factors (eigenvalue ≥ 1), with no question being eliminated. Reliability of the scale is good (Cronbach's alpha = 0.80). Questions under each factor measure the items in the same domain, in specific, Domain 1: Men's capability; Domain 2: Men's accepted conducts; Domain 3: Men's sexuality, and Domain 4: Men's role in the family (table 3.4.15)

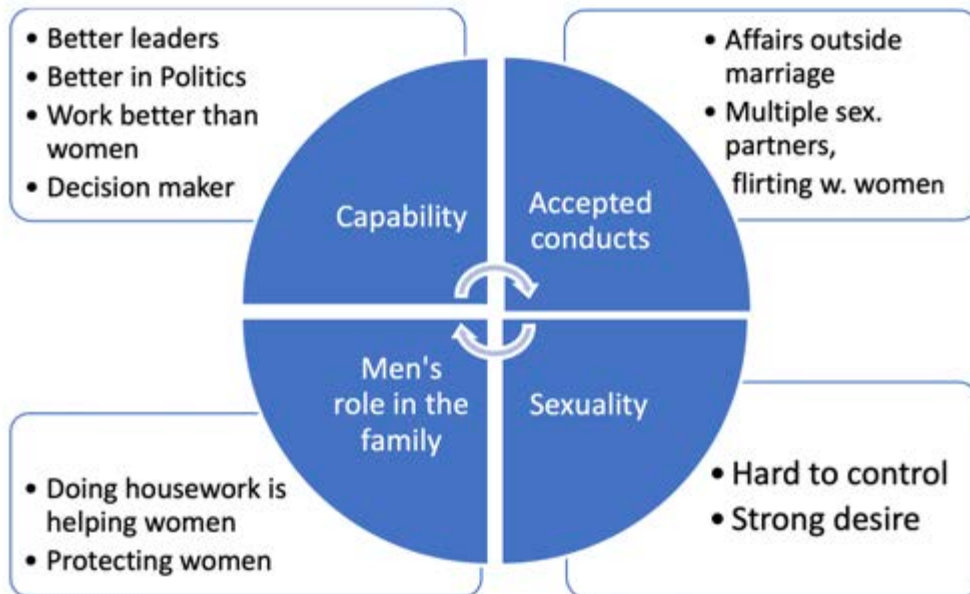
TABLE 3.4.15. **Factors and factor loading on stereotypes of men**

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.				
Norms on men in relation to women	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Capability				
1. Men are better leaders than women	0.86			
2. Men work better than women	0.82			
3. Men are better at politics than women	0.80			
4. Husband/ Boyfriend should be the one who make final decision	0.52			
Accepted conducts				
5. It is understandable and acceptable for men to have affairs outside marriage		0.81		
6. It is normal for men to flirt with women		0.79		
7. It is normal for men to have multiple sexual partners		0.77		
Sexuality				
8. It is harder for men than women to control sexual desire			0.89	
9. Men have stronger sexual desire than women			0.85	
Men's role in the family				
10. Men doing housework is helping women				0.80
11. Men are the shoulders for women to rely on				0.75

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

There is no difference found in results of factor analysis of men's perception of men in different age groups or among urban and rural men. Similar to the findings about men's perception of women, this findings of men's perception about men themselves once again confirm the popularity and persistency of the traditional masculine norms and stereotypes in Viet Nam.

Box 3.4.2 visually highlights the findings from factor analysis on norms internalised by men on men's capability, accepted conducts, sexuality, and men's role in the family.

Box 3.4.2: Stereotypes of men

In summary, findings from factor analysis point out the the popularity of the gender-biased believes/stereotypes of women and men. These believes and stereotypes are all based on the assumption that capability, personality, quality, and behaviours of men and women have been predetermined by nature and thus are unchangeable. These perceptions are widely accepted without argument to the superiority and privileges of men over women, as well as the inevitability of gender inequality. What is most noteworthy is the popularity of these norms across all social groups and their persistent existence in the thoughts of generations of men in Viet Nam.

Stories shared by women and men in the qualitative study are excellent illustrations for the aforementioned findings. Positive thoughts and behaviors are intertwined with deeply rooted traditional norms. Individuals may have conflicting thoughts and inconsistency between their thoughts and their behaviors.

The story below of a woman indicates her own expectation of women to take care of the family, 'tolerating and sacrificing to keep the family's happiness', which binds her to the so-called 'heavenly given roles' of a woman:

My husband and I have known each other for 20 years and been married for 17 years, our children are 15, 16 years old already, but he is drunk all the time. One day I told him

“My parents raised me, then I got married to you and moved to your house, I spent the whole youth to give birth to your children, I haven’t got anything, I still have to work, give birth, take care of this family and the whole family on your side and my side. Now we are old already, you are 53 years old, you can’t keep drinking with those 30 year-old men. If you falls ill, the first person who has to suffer from that is me and your children.”

Female FGD, Hoa Binh.

In terms of work, a number of men nowadays have more positive thoughts about women, especially the young generation. Nevertheless, they think that women and men are born with different capability, men have better logic than women but are not as sensitive or emotionally diligent as women. Because of that, women are better at jobs and position that are more suitable to their natural capability, and women will succeed if they know how to use their emotional capability for work.

A good example is this technology engineer in Hanoi thinking that women could be successful leader if she could make use of her skilful manner:



Men may not be better leaders than women. I think women actually have better EQ, which means their mannerism and skills in dealing with issues can be better than men’s, and this is extremely important for a leader, so it’s hard to say who is better. There are women who are better leaders than men in some certain areas.

Male, 28 years old, Hanoi.

A young man in Hoa Binh also share a similar thought:



It is an equal society today. There were things that only men could do back then now but women can do them all the same. For example in the past it was more difficult for women to work in the government, but now, whoever capable can do it. And chance is women could work better than men. Why do I say so? Women are more diligent, skillful, and more convincing to people. Women also drink less, they are more aware.

Male, 30 years old, Hoa Binh.

Nevertheless, many, such as the story below, still believe that some technology and science works are not suitable for women as women’s logic is not as good as men’s. Women are more suitable for work related to emotions, and that is because they are naturally that way:

I think women are better at engineering and technology than men. I work in this field and I barely see girls working in IT, and even if they are in IT they don't code or program which requires good logic, they normally just run test. I think women's logic is worse than men's so they don't often work in this field. But women's emotions are better than men's. This partly is because they are born this way, naturally so. Maybe women are better at jobs that require more emotions, like teaching is one of them, because they can deal with emotions better. Or jobs in sales and communication.

Male, 28 years old, Hanoi.

A number of men said they like independent and decisive women instead of the traditional woman type:

Actually in my opinion, women need to be a bit smart, intelligent and competent, know how to earn money, deal with issues skillfully. To earn good income or not depends on the market also but at least she needs to know how to earn enough for her life, I don't like women who just stay at home and are not able to generate an income.

Male, 35 years old, Hanoi.

For me, I really like the active, independent type of women who do not depend on something or have to follow a certain stereotype about being girly or having this hairstyle or having to cook well... I think women nowadays need to be comfortable with themselves. They can enjoy cooking as a personal hobby instead of a duty or responsibility or something like the norms. Basically I think a woman has to be open-minded and have freedom like that.

Male, 25 years old, Ho Chi Minh city.

Meanwhile, women themselves persistently maintain the traditional norms:

Girls need to be good and fulfill the duties with her parents in law, need to take care of her family. As a daughter in law, she doesn't need to bring a lot of money but she needs to be good at taking care of the family.

Female FGD, Hoa Binh.

Regarding sexuality, men and women both believe it is harder for men to control their sexual desire. Therefore, men are expected to be more proactive in sexual activities while women have to accept as this is the natural law:



Men always lead, can't have the woman asking for it, right? It would be so odd for a woman to be proactive. It is hard for men to control, but if a woman can't control it would be too... weird.

Male, 35 years old, Chu Chi, Ho Chi Minh city.



For me personally, even if I don't want but if my husband has the desire I will still have to do it. Shouldn't leave the man dissatisfied, especially in sex. They have desire when they are sober or drunk.

Female FGD, Hoa Binh.

Not everyone thinks that way, however. This younger man believes that men can completely control his sexual desire if he really wants to:



Whether or not a man can control [sexual desire] depends on his effort, it doesn't depend on whether his sexual desire is strong or not. Someone who loves his wife and children can still control his desire and not have affairs, not have another woman. I am also not so sure that a woman's desire is less than men's. Maybe women are more emotional so they could fall more easily into an affairs than men.

Male, 28 years old, Hanoi.

The thoughts reflected below of a young man is a strong example for how traditional gender norms create strong pressure and limitations for women and men. For women, that is the role of a mother. For men, the role of the family's breadwinner:



Actually men has only one advantage than women which is men don't need to give birth. Because the time that women need to spend for pregnancy, birth and after birth will make her slower than men. Looking at age and growth, men have more time to develop his career. Women have the same amount of time but besides work they

also have to fulfill the role of a mother. This is the only point that is better for men than women, because both are the same really. However I see that men's EQ is lower so often they waste some opportunities, not only professionally but also emotionally. This is a disadvantage for them. Another point is the norm that men have to be the breadwinner of the family, this old norm puts men in so much pressure, force them to earn a lot of money. I think this is a pressure on men that they always have to think of a way to earn money.

Male, 30 years old, Hanoi.

In the end, nevertheless, family is still the central value of the Vietnamese people. Women can do anything but family is still the top priority, both women and men need to prioritise family:

I think it is good for a married woman to prioritise family. Not to the extent to leave her career completely but once she is married, the family and children should be the most important. My point of view is that both men and women should prioritise family. For example, if my children or my wife is sick I am willing to leave work to go home. That's normal. I can find work anywhere.

Male, 31 years old, Hanoi.

Sharing of a 32 year-old man in Khanh Hoa quoted below helps explain why many men believe that they have to be the protective shoulders for women. He even stressed on the hegemonic role of a man:

Basically men are stronger than women. Because we are stronger than women, we have to show that we are the pillar, we can work and earn money to provide for our wife and children. It is very rare for a women to be the pillar, only when something is wrong with the man, otherwise if a man is healthy he has to lead and the woman needs to support in the back. It's like going to war, the women are in the back, so the children can look up and learn from that.

Male, 32 years old, Khanh Hoa.

Qualitative findings reflect the combination of traditional and modern values in the men's perspectives about women and men. On the one hand, they are attracted to the new values,

the new image of man and a free woman who is independent in her life – which is growing quickly in a fast developing society and globalisation. On the other hand, they are also still bound to the patriarchal mentality that has been existing for thousands of years in the daily life, relationships with parents, relatives, friends, and communities, and even in the public communication and educational system.

3.4.5. Expectations for sons and daughters

Expectations for sons and daughters help provide more insights into the gender stereotypes among Vietnamese men. The respondents who have at least one child were asked to share their opinions about their expectations for sons and daughters in areas including family, education, health, and employment. Table 3.4.14 illustrates the expectations in ranking of selection from high to low. According to which, for both sons and daughters, in a father’s perspective, health is the most important aspect, with the selection rate of 78.26% for daughters and 73.04% for sons. Nonetheless, a difference regarding the ranking of the other aspects between sons and daughters can be witnessed. For daughters, the other important aspects are subsequently ‘family’ (51.14%), ‘education’ (47.30%), and finally ‘employment/career’ (23.30%). For sons, the other important aspects are ‘education’ (50.57%), ‘family’ (43.97%), and ‘employment/career’ (33.42%). It can be seen that, in ranking, education is considered more important for sons than for daughters. Even though employment/career is ranked last for both sons and daughters, the rate selecting that employment is very important is still higher for sons than for daughters (33.42% compared to 23.30%).

TABLE 3.4.16. Expectations for sons and daughters (%)

Indicators/ Aspects	For daughters			Indicators/ Aspects	For sons		
	Very important	Little important	Not important		Very important	Little important	Not important
Health	78.26	16.52	5.22	Health	73.04	19.28	7.67
Family	51.14	24.11	24.74	Education	50.57	25.13	24.31
Education	47.30	26.22	26.49	Family	43.97	24.89	32.14
Employment/ Career	23.30	33.15	43.55	Employment/ Career	33.42	30.07	35.88

In the qualitative study, a number of interviewees also stressed the vitality of education for son more. Sons are encouraged to study higher to ensure a good job in the future:

[Our family] prioritises sons more, women are ever really prioritised in education from the past until now because in our area, the elders think women just need to learn a little and then get married.

Male, 41 years old, Chuong My, Hanoi

My parents told me as a son firstly I have to be strong, I can't cry, and I have to focus on study so later on I can do harder work than girls.

Male, 35 years old, Hanoi

In my opinion, for a son, first we have to give him good education, we need to make him become a competent person by anyway.

Male, 54 years old, Ho Chi Minh city

Results featured in table 3.4.15 demonstrate the difference in expectations of the participants regarding employment for sons and daughters. The criterion 'Suitable with the child's ability and preference' was most selected for both sons (81.06%) and daughters (83.17). There is a distinct difference, however, between the two other criteria of 'Having high income' and 'Having little pressure and can spend plenty of time for family' for sons and daughters. 'Having high income' was selected to be important for sons by many more than for daughters, meanwhile, 'Having little pressure and can spend plenty of time for family' was considered more important for daughters.

TABLE 3.4.17. **Expectations of participants regarding employment for sons and daughters (%)**

Expectations about work	For sons			Expectations about work	For daughters		
	Important	Little important	Not important		Important	Little important	Not important
Suitable with the child's ability and preference	81.06	13.21	5.73	Suitable with the child's ability and preference	83.17	11.65	5.18
Stable in a government office	47.57	22.55	29.87	Stable in a government office	50.29	23.14	26.57
Have high income	44.14	30.00	25.87	Have high income	29.92	34.90	39.70
Have little pressure and can spend time for family	27.73	34.24	38.53	Have little pressure and can spend time for family	41.14	30.31	28.55

ISDS's study on 'Social determinants of gender inequality' in 2015 pointed out that by giving women the role of family care taker, women have to accept jobs with low income so that they can spend more time for their family.¹⁵¹

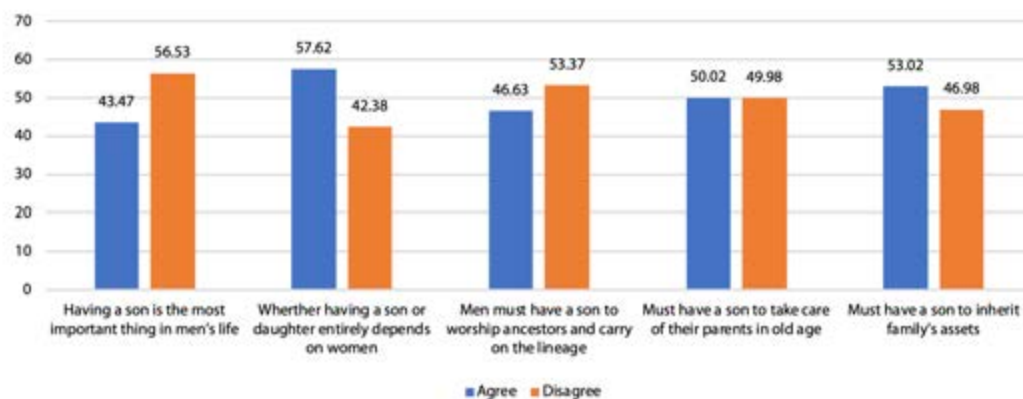
Women themselves have internalised that women only need to be in the back and support the men:

I told my daughter in law that ‘You don’t have to work hard, just need to behave well and take care of the family, be the strong support for your son.’

Female FGD, Hoa Binh.

As regards the values of sons and daughters in a family, figure 3.4.1 indicates that sons still hold an important place for many of the respondents with 56.53% agreeing to the statement ‘Having sons is the most important thing for a man’. Those agreeing to ‘Must have sons for ancestor worshipping and lineage continuing’ make up 53.37%, and the percentage of respondents thinking that a son is a must to take care of parents in old age and to inherit the family’s possession accounts for almost half of the sample size.

FIGURE 3.4.1. **Statements on sons’ value in a family**



Interestingly, in the qualitative study, many interviewees expressed concerns in educating sons yet all highly appreciated daughters in looking after parents in old age:

Everyone is the same, daughters look after the parents better than sons. Sons make it more difficult, they are naughty and create a lot of troubles. It's very tiring to take care of them, otherwise they will all get bad.

Male, 48 years old, Ho Chi Minh city.

Some even stated that daughters are more valuable than sons in today's society.



I thought about it, sons or daughters are both precious. I still think so now. It's even better for my daughters to have more daughters. Excuse me but I think daughters are way better than sons. Nowadays this is my perspective.

Male, 63 years old, Hanoi.

Some families do not discriminate between sons and daughters in the issue of who can live with and take care of the parents. This progressive attitude, however, is more common in the interviews or group discussions in Ho Chi Minh city:



My family is equal, whoever able to can take care of the parents. For example the child who is more wealthy can look after the parents and the family better. It doesn't matter if it's a son or daughter. Whoever lives with the parents will look after the parents more.

Male, 43 years old, Cu Chi, Ho Chi Minh city.

In reality, although many people have better awareness about the equal positions between sons and daughters, son preference mentality still exists in many areas, in some cases even more than before, especially in the more wealthy families. This has been confirmed in the recent studies^{152, 153}. Speaking about this phenomanon, a woman in Hoa Binh said:



I think this issue (trying to have son) is more and more serious. It was even less back then but now when a family has money they care about that even more.

Female FGD, Hoa Binh.

Pressure on sonless men often comes from other people around them, an example is as a young man in Hanoi sharing below:

152 UNFPA (2011). Son Preference in Vietnam: Ancients Desires, Advancing Technologies (2011) (see [http://vietnam.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Son preference in Vietnam_ENG_Final version for printing.pdf](http://vietnam.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Son%20preference%20in%20Vietnam_ENG_Final%20version%20for%20printing.pdf)).

153 Study on Gender, Masculinity and Son Preference in Nepal and Vietnam (2012) (see http://vietnam.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Masculinity_Report_Nepal_VietNam_ENG.pdf).

In the thoughts and wish of almost 100% Vietnamese men, honestly, to have a son is still the best because we are influenced by the Oriental culture and we are living in a culture of village community. Normally in special events like family gatherings, festivals or ancestor worshipping, basically if everyone else has both sons and daughters, I would like the same too [...] Sometimes I also feel a bit sad, can't say that I don't... My relatives have always told me to try for a son. They still talk about that.

Male, 35 years old, Hanoi.

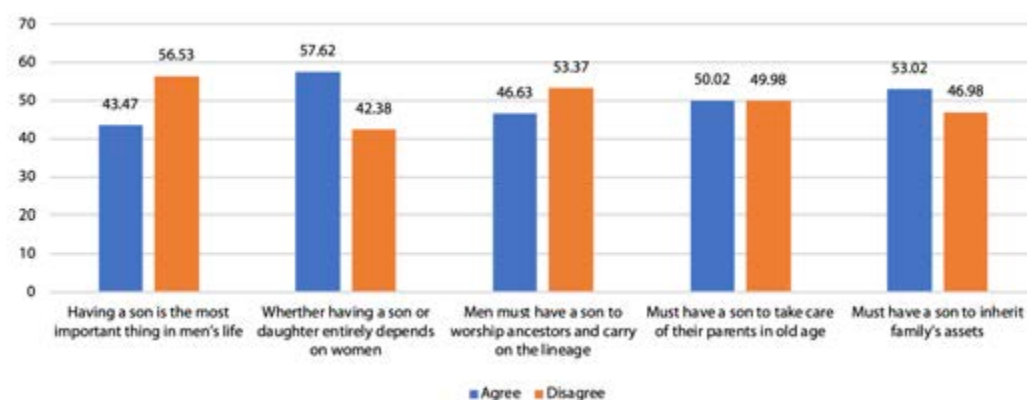
In some cases, even the women themselves are those who can not handle the pressure on having sons. In the quote below, the man did not give pressure to his wife, but internalising too deeply the traditional gender norms valuing sons over daughters, the wife ended up preserving these norms:

Among my friends, the number of men needing sons is even less than women. Many women want to give birth to a son for her husband. When we meet each other, my friends say that actually sons are naughty. Maybe one can have a son but can he educate his son to be a good person? My wife was so determined to have a son so that relatives can't tell her that she doesn't know how to give birth. Actually the women want to keep the happiness of the family, they are very afraid of the husband's family looking down at them for not having sons. Like back in the day, men were more valued than women, but nowadays we think more freely. We are very happy to have two, three, or even four daughters, no need for a son.

Male, 45 years old, Khanh Hoa.

Figure 3.4.2 indicates the difference between rural and urban male populations, as the agreement rate to traditional norms on sons' values among rural men is higher than that in urban men.

FIGURE 3.4.2. Rate of men agreeing to statements on sons' values, by living area



There are variations between age groups, as younger men appear to have more positive attitude towards having sons. The rate of those disagreeing to the gender-biased norms on the importance of having sons is lower among the younger age groups. This suggests that son preference mentality has changed, which could be a positive indicator for effort to mitigate the skewed sex ratio at birth in Viet Nam in recent years. Comparison between different age groups in rural and urban areas shows more distinguished difference between urban men than in the rural population. (See Table 3.4.16).

TABLE 3.4.18. **Rate of men disagreeing to norms on sons' values, by age and living**

Living area	Urban				Rural				
	Age group	18-29	30-39	40-49	50+	18-29	30-39	40-49	50+
To have a son is extremely important for a man		53.52	52.36	46.46	37.9	46.06	48.97	36.25	36.08
Whether to have sons or daughters depends completely on the women		65.23	65.35	58.66	50.99	68.88	66.37	54.08	43.81
Must have sons for ancestor worshipping and lineage continuing		56.64	52.36	50.39	43.25	46.89	49.85	42.6	38.66
Must have sons to take care of parents in old age		53.52	59.06	51.57	45.63	47.3	56.05	46.83	45.62
Must have sons to inherit family's possession		59.38	61.81	55.51	48.21	53.53	56.93	50.15	46.39
	N	256	254	254	504	241	339	331	388

In fact, not all but some qualitative participants shared that they themselves did not feel the need to have sons:



It's not important for me to have sons or daughters, not even important about the number of children. It's up to nature.

Male, 30 years old, Hanoi



... Nowadays to have sons or daughters doesn't matter to me, as long as we have a child. Daughter or son, both are good, not a problem because in the society I see that they are the same, property now is shared equally. Sometimes a son could even become bad. Daughters often work hard and are more responsible to the parents. That's it, to think sons are more important is outdated already... It's all equal now in the law.

Male, 35 years old, Ho Chi Minh city.

Some people's thoughts on the issues of ancestor worshipping or lineage continuing have also changed. They no longer tie those roles to the sons. However, this is more common in the Southern areas:



Back then the old generation valued sons a lot more. But now sons and daughters are equal. My parents loved their grandson but when he got too naughty and wasted so much money they didn't like him so much anymore. Now it depends on the education. Back then the men's family may love sons because of the lineage continuing. Now that is not the case anymore, because he creates more troubles than continuing the lineage.

Male FGD, Cu Chi, Ho Chi Minh city.



Nowadays a plate of fruits is enough for the ancestor worshipping, no problem. I don't really care about that, there is nothing after death.

Male, 54 years old, Ho Chi Minh city.

Education poses positive impacts on the shifting of attitude towards having sons. Statistics in Table 3.4.17 signify that men with higher educational level have a higher rate disagreeing to the norms valuing sons. For instance, regarding the statement 'To have a son is extremely important for a man', the disagreement rate increases as the educational level gets higher, starting with 28.21% among those who never went to school, to 51.17% and 54.63% in the groups of technical school/college and university and higher (Table 3.4.17). A similar trend is also witnessed in other statements.

TABLE 3.4.19. **Rate of men disagreeing to statements on sons' values, by educational attainment**

	Never went to school	Primary school	Secondary school	High school	Technical school/ college	University and higher
To have a son is extremely important for a man	28.21	29.35	39.73	46.71	51.17	54.63
Whether to have sons or daughters depends completely on the women	28.21	34.06	48.26	64.19	75.59	78.91
Must have sons for ancestor worshipping and lineage continuing	17.95	27.9	41.53	51.5	61.5	58.15
Must have sons to take care of parents in old age	28.21	31.16	44.56	54.97	61.03	64.22
Must have sons to inherit family's possession	25.64	31.52	46.46	58.44	67.14	69.97
N	39	276	891	835	213	313

When asked about the plans on giving property to sons and daughters, a positive change has also been noted as up to 70% wished to share property equally to their children. This is a promising figure. Nonetheless, perhaps due to the son preference mentality, when being asked the hypothetical question on property division in the case of having both sons and daughters, the suggestion of giving only to daughters or giving mainly to daughters received a significantly smaller agreement rate (around 1%) than to give only to sons or give mainly to sons (See Table 3.4.18).

TABLE 3.4.20. **Property division for children (%)**

Type of property	Give only to sons	Give mainly to sons	Give mainly to daughters	Give only to daughters	Give equally as per law	Don't know
Residential land/ houses	3.82	17.49	0.58	0.23	73.63	4.25
Agricultural land	2.26	12.54	0.82	0.27	74.52	9.58
Family's business	2.73	12.08	0.66	0.23	68.72	15.58
Money, gold	1.75	12.5	1.13	0.47	78.34	5.8
Other valuable property	1.91	10.95	0.74	0.23	75.61	10.56

There is a distinct difference between urban and rural men regarding how they want to give residential land if they have both sons and daughters, even in the younger age groups. Data in Table 3.4.19 demonstrates that the young group of 18-29 in rural areas has the highest rate giving residential land and house to only sons/ mainly sons, which is double that in the young group in

urban area (25.73% and 11.33% respectively). In contradiction to that, the percentage of those sharing equally between children is notably higher among urban young men than their rural counterparts (at 82.03% and 69.71% respectively). These figures are not very different between age groups in rural areas, while in urban areas, the younger groups tend to give residential land and house to their children equally more than the older age groups.

TABLE 3.4.21. Residential land/house division for children, by age groups and living areas (%)

Age groups	Give only to sons/ mainly to sons		Give only to daughters/ mainly to daughters		Give equally as per law		Don't know	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
18-29	11.33	25.73	0	0.82	82.03	69.71	6.64	3.73
30-39	15.36	26.55	0	0.59	79.53	70.21	4.72	2.95
40-49	15.36	24.17	1.57	1.51	77.56	69.79	5.51	4.53
50+	22.42	24.74	0.2	1.55	73.61	70.36	3.77	3.35

Table 3.4.20 reaffirms the crucial role of education as the rate of men choosing to give residential land and house to children equally is higher among those with higher educational attainment, even though there is a certain proportion of men in the higher educational level choosing to give residential land to only sons or mainly sons while the corresponding figure for only daughters/ mainly daughters is extremely minimal.

TABLE 3.4.22. Residential land and house division for children, by educational level (%)

Educational level	Give only to sons/ mainly to sons	Give only to daughters/ mainly to daughters	Give equally as per law	Don't know
Never went to school	17.95	7.69	71.79	2.56
Primary school	24.28	1.81	69.20	4.71
Secondary school	23.23	0.67	72.17	3.93
High school	25.63	0.24	74.01	4.19
Technical school/ College	16.44	0.94	79.34	3.29
University and higher	16.30	0.96	77.00	5.75

Qualitative findings shine more light to the reasons why sons are more in favour when it comes to property inheritance, especially regarding residential land and house.

Family's property should mainly be given to sons, only in the cases of very wealthy families with a lot of land and house then daughters can be given some.

Male, 33 years old, Hanoi.

Sons always have more advantages, for example regarding property, sons are always given more. Land is only given to sons, some families give also to daughters but not much.

Male, 41 years old, Hanoi.

That time almost all parents preferred sons... Because daughters belong to other people, only daughter-in-law belongs to the family... That's the norm because once the daughter is married, she will be with her husband, belong to the husband's family and inherit with her husband... Now it's 50 – 50.

Male, 35 years old, Ho Chi Minh city.

In conclusion, gender -biased perceptions still prevails, especially in the area of property division and land access of women. Being born a woman already means more disadvantages in property ownership than men. These findings also imply that gender-based discrimination in property division between sons and daughters is still severe in rural areas, and up to ¼ of men in the two youngest age groups still holds the mentality of giving residential land and house only to sons or mainly to sons. This indicates more awareness raising activities are required in the rural areas and from a younger age so that the necessary changes can take place in shifting traditional gender-biased norms which cause gender inequality and hinder rights to property and possessions of women and young girls.

Education and globalisation, nevertheless, are factors changing the perception of many men in property division for sons and daughters.

3.5. Men's perceptions of women and gender equality

Men's perception about women is examined through their expectations about a good wife. Men's perception on gender equality is examined through their understanding of the concept of gender equality and their awareness about gender-related laws namely 2006 Law on Gender Equality, 2007 Law on prevention and combating domestic violence and the 2014 Law on Marriage and Family.

3.5.1. Expectations about a good wife

To understand men's expectations about a good wife they were asked to review a list of 13 qualities that commonly attached to a good wife including the qualities in appearance, capability, and personality that fall under the traditional norms of a tolerant, obedient, and domestic woman. The respondents, then, were asked to select the qualities that they consider to be essential for a good wife in their own perspective

Figure 3.5.1 presents the results of the selection. The four 'traditional' qualities indicating the care-taker role of women were selected most, including 'domestically skillful' (89.87%), 'always sacrifice for the family' (88%), 'always listen to and agree with the husband's opinions'. (83.84%), 'have jobs that allow plenty of time for family' (73.16%).

Other criteria such as 'to have high income' was also selected by 60.03% of the respondents. The other two criteria on appearance and education were less selected.

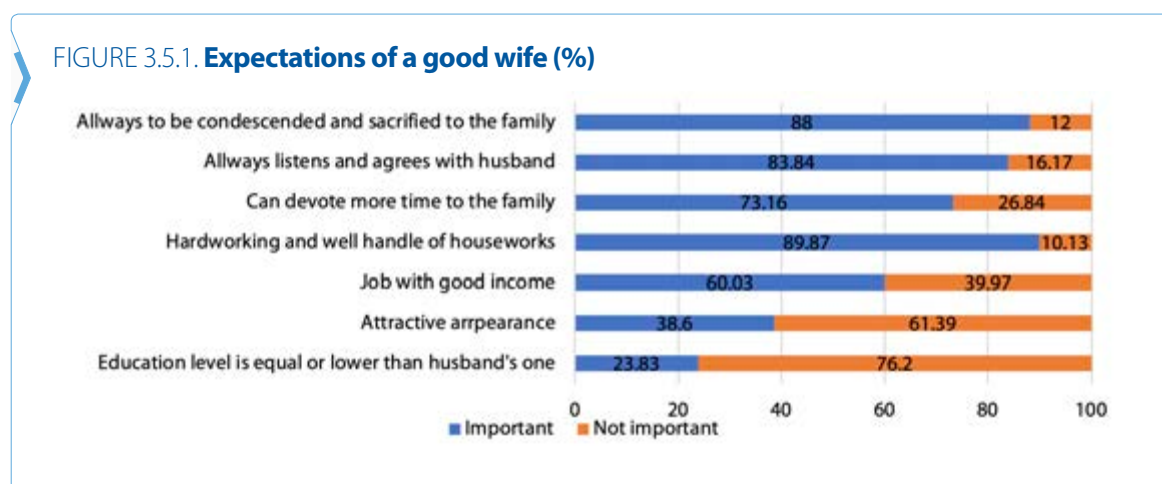


Table 3.5.1 shows the rate of respondents considering these qualities to be of importance in a good wife. It appears that the four 'traditional' qualities highlighting the care-taker role of a woman were selected by the majority of the respondents. The difference between rural and urban populations as well as between age groups is insignificant. Looking at other independent variables such as marital status, religion, being the only son/ oldest son in the family and in the lineage, the difference also is not noticeable. This signifies the consistency of these traditional norms against women in men's perception.

The importance of ‘having a high income’ does not vary much between demographic variables, and generally is thought to be essential, with the selection rate of around 60%. The quality of ‘having a lower or equal educational level to the husband’ was selected differently between the two youngest age groups and the remaining three age groups. The young men do not care about their wife’s educational level as much as their older counterparts.

TABLE 3.5.1. **Important qualities of a good wife by living areas and educational level**

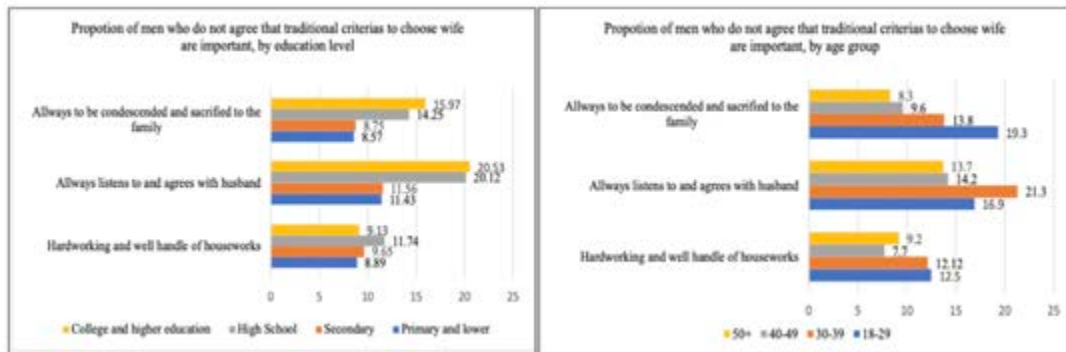
	Domestically skilful	Always agree with husband	Sacrifice for family	Have plenty of time for family	High income	Attractive appearance	Lower/equal education to husband
Urban	89.35	81.08	86.67	71.92	58.99	40.22	25.40
Rural	90.38	86.52	89.30	74.37	61.05	37.02	22.24
18-29	87.52	83.10	80.68	67.00	55.13	39.83	18.31
30-39	88.83	78.75	86.17	72.17	57.12	33.33	18.88
40-49	92.31	86.81	90.43	77.27	61.88	35.35	28.18
50-59	91.47	86.32	91.70	74.55	63.01	42.32	27.02
60+	89.16	81.47	89.96	71.43	62.55	39.00	30.12
Primary school and lower	91.11	88.57	91.43	74.28	66.03	37.46	29.80
Secondary school	90.35	88.44	91.24	76.20	63.07	34.57	23.23
High school	88.27	79.88	85.75	69.94	56.91	36.41	21.2
Technical school or higher	90.88	79.46	84.02	72.44	56.08	49.62	25.28
Total	89.87	83.84	88.00	73.16	60.03	37.60	23.83

On the other hand, the analysis of rates of those considering these traditional qualities to be not important shows an interesting movement. Figure 3.5.2 demonstrates that men in the two young age groups (18-29 and 30-39) and men with higher educational level selected the qualities promoting less traditional gender norms.

This indicates that young age and high educational level are the two factors with positive influence on men’s perception on feminine norms. The two younger age groups tend to not consider the qualities of being ‘domestically skilful’, ‘obedient’, and ‘tolerant/sacrificing’ to be important. The two highest educational groups tend to agree to the qualities of ‘always agreeing to the husband’ and ‘sacrificing for the family’ a lot less than the lower three educational groups.

These findings are consistent with those in the ‘Social determinants of gender inequality in Viet Nam’.

FIGURE 3.5.2. Rates of men not considering gender norms to be important qualities of a good wife – by educational level and age



The qualitative findings reaffirm the prevalence of traditional gender norms in men’s perception when discussing their expectations for a good wife.

‘To be domestically skillful’ is one of the most mentioned qualities by the interviewees as a top criterion to choose a wife:

Wife is a husband’s rib, the wife needs to be more domestically skillful than her husband, more understanding, caring and sharing, and that brings happiness.

Male, 45 years old, Khanh Hoa.

When I got married before I didn’t need her to be beautiful, just needed her to be skillful to take care of the business and the family. That’s the most important, to take care of the family. Life is less hard when you have someone who can takes care of the family well.

Male, 45 years old, Ho Chi Minh city.

I wanted a wife with good health, no need for her to be very beautiful, but she would need to be domestically skillful. For example, to cook, to shop, to take care of the family well.

Male, 53 years old, Hoa Binh.

My father used to tell me to have to look at a woman's kitchen and restroom, to see if she is clean or not. The first important thing is for a woman to be domestically skillful, take care of the family, love and care for husband and children, social things only come after. My wife is excellent at taking care of me and our children.

Male, 43 years old, Hanoi.

Many also talked about the quality of 'taking good care of family' to highlight their wish for a wife who fully dedicates to the family:

Everyone wants to have a wife who can take care of the family more than the one who works all day that they can't ever even see. I think the wife needs to spend time for the family and the family must be above all else.

Male, 28 years old, Hanoi.

The wife has to be responsible for all the domestic work, she has to take care of the family and has to tolerate and sacrifice to together with her husband look after her and her husband's big family.

Male FGD, Me Linh, Hanoi.

... a wife must know how to take care of a family [...] not to mention to take care of the lineage as a daughter in law, firstly a woman needs to take good care of her family.

Male FGD, Hoa Binh.

In my opinion, I will choose someone who is gentle, thoughtful, with good manner, knows how to take care of the family, knows how to satisfy husband and children, look after husband's parents well.

Male FGD, Ho Chi Minh city.

Some young people are less influenced by traditional norms. They care more about a woman's intelligence and competence rather than her ability to take care of a family:

Basically decent-looking, not too ugly. I think a competent woman will be able to get married easily, cooking skills and things like that are not necessary. If the house is dirty either the husband or wife would have to clean it, they can't just leave it dirty. I just need someone who is decent-looking and competent.

Male, 23 years old, Hanoi.

Young people also do not emphasise the quality of 'obedience' – a woman who always listens to her husband, which is a common criterion to choose a wife in the Vietnamese society. Young men nowadays prefer a wise woman who does not just comply with whatever her husband says.

Those who would listen to whatever we say are not necessarily good because maybe we are not always right, we can be wrong sometimes and if so the wife needs to help tell us. If we are wrong and the women just follow, that's not good.

Male, 34 years old, Hoa Binh.

For some young people, the criteria of 'having a stable job' and sharing similar life values are more appreciated:

If I get married I would like to find someone with a stable job and share a common voice, common way of living with me.

Male, 30 years old, Hanoi.

Since the quality of 'taking good care of the family' is crucial for the majority of men, they – regardless of their age, educational level, and living area – share the same hesitation for women with high educational attainment and success. They stated that it would be difficult for women like that to dedicate properly to her family:

I think that women in high position and with high education will find it hard to get married. As they focus their time on work and career, certainly they wouldn't have time to find a husband, to get married, and to have children.

Male, 30 years old, Hanoi.

Successful women often have to sacrifice their family and children. That's not acceptable.

Male, 34 years old, Hoa Binh.

3.5.2. Perception on gender equality and level of knowledge on gender-related laws

Most of the qualitative participants were aware of what gender equality entails. An example below extracted from a focused group discussion of men in the ages of 50 and higher in Ho Chi Minh city discusses about gender equality in the rights to property, ownership, in sharing housework, and in political power:

Gender equality is now men and women are the same, for example about inheritance, men and women inherit the same without discrimination. About politics, women now can also run for presidents, so can men. About money everyone can earn money, no difference.

Nowadays both husband and wife have names in the land register certificate, each has a motorbike. For example, taking the children to school, the wife takes one and the husband takes the other.

Basically, housework is shared now, the wife cooks while the husband washes clothes.

Male FGD, Ho Chi Minh city.

Gender equality is no need to assign work in the family, everyone takes the initiative. For example if the wife cooks, the husband will wash the dishes. If the wife is busy with something, the husband helps. To be fair, the husband can't just sit and tell his wife to do this or that.

To share. Gender equality, basically, is that women can do all things and men also can do all things. Gender equality is not that women have to do small things, they can do whatever they are capable of. No discrimination between women and men.

Male FGD, Khanh Hoa.

Some young people have very clear ideas about gender equality. An example from a 28 year-old man below states that gender equality has to come from the right awareness. He also concerned that gender equality in Viet Nam is not yet genuine. He stressed that the rigidity in the traditional roles of men and women, in which men are the breadwinner or those with final decision in the power structure, still strongly indicates gender inequality:

Gender equality means everyone is equal in our thoughts, shares work with each other, no one is dependent on anyone. It's not that a man has to do this kind of work while a woman is forced to do that kind. People can do what they are capable of. Actually, what people call gender equality is still something we all aim at, right now in Viet Nam we can't really say that we have gender equality because the old norms are so deeply rooted. We were 1000 years under the Chinese dynasty so this kind of mentality is so well integrated into everyone. My family luckily is not like that, but in other families they still want the men to be the family's pillar. Or in many families men make the final decisions, or they want to have sons for lineage continuing.

Male, 28 years old, Hanoi.

Noticeably, speaking of gender equality, the majority of the male participants, after sharing how they understand this concept, often referred to their own family. The below 35 year-old man is a good example. He thinks that gender equality is not about assigning work for each person but each one has to be aware of their responsibility to the family and to each other. He is willing to do everything in the house, even taking care of the children, when his wife is busy with her work:

I think my family is quite equal. Housework has already been shared clearly, whoever sees what needs to be done can do it. Like myself, I cook, clean the house, wash the dishes, feed and clean and play with the kids. My wife sometimes is too busy, she has to work from day to night, then I will do everything then do my work. Whatever is there I will do it.

Male, 35 years old, Hanoi.

A man with the equality mindset does not only share the decision making power and housework with his wife but also has to be far and respectful towards his children:

My family is always equal. Firstly in the family, husband and wife need to discuss with each other. If the wife is tired, I will cook, wash clothes and do the things my wife normally does so that she can take a rest. That's equal. Secondly is about how to treat the children. We have to love and take good care of our daughter since a young age already. Now she is a teenage, we have never shouted at her, nowadays you can snap at the kids to teach them, if you want to teach them first you have to be their friends to talk to them, to help them. First the parents need to be the friends with their child so that they could understand what their child is doing and what she wants.

Male, 30 years old, Hanoi.

Equality is an indicator of happiness:



I think for a family to be happy they needs to be equal. Besides professional work, housework needs to be shared between each other, one cooks and the other washes the dishes or clothes. Everyone is tired after their work so housework needs to be shared. I think that's a happy family.

Male, 30 years old, Hanoi.

A number of female participants in a focused group discussion in Hoa Binh and Ho Chi Minh city also pointed out that the manifestation of gender equality in their daily life is more and more vivid:



Now we are a lot more equal, unlike the past. For example, in the past men had their kind of work and women had their kind of work, but now men and women can work all the same.

In the past only women took care of children but now men also do that a lot. When I gave birth, my husband took care of me very well.

Like my family, even though we don't have a son but my husband doesn't put any pressure on me regardless of other people's opinions.

Female FGD, Hoa Binh.



The more modern the society gets, the more Vietnamese men will respect women. They have already started to share housework with women more.

Female FGD, Ho Chi Minh city.

Nevertheless, most of the interviewees claimed that gender inequality is still very prevalent in reality, in family and also in society:



Still there, because of men. Many men don't think and are not aware of how the society has changed, they still have the old ways of thinking, still very dominating and violent. Like a husband or a father dominating over those under his power.

Male FGD, Ho Chi Minh city.

I think gender equality now is not valuing men over men. Basically everyone is equal with each other and has the same rights. But in reality I think there is only 30% gender equality at the moment and 70% not yet.

Male, 23 years old, Hanoi.

When you go to places, how many women do you see working as the leaders? Mainly men. Even a small position like the neighbourhood leader is still mainly men. That's why I am saying, gender equality in our country is still just in theory.

Female FGD, Khanh Hoa.

Gender inequality is also reflected in the discrimination in labour force. Women are limited in employment and promotion opportunities and the main reason is because of the so-called 'virtuous mother and wife role' that Vietnamese women have been bound to by official public communication:

I think our society still values men over women. Speaking of work, for example, some companies hire only men or only women, and some companies only hire married women, or they hire women with the requirement that they will not get pregnant in some years. That's really overboard. Another example is men are often more favoured over women when it comes to work trip or promotion. Because in communication or dealing with work, men are faster and they can commit better to the company. For women, once they are married and have children they have to take 6 months off for pregnancy, some will come back to work but some may just quit.

Male, 30 years old, Hanoi.

In Vietnam, sometimes in recruitment there is a discrimination between men and women. Like for the position of a shipper, or a store keeper, they think it's only for men. They think that women will get married and give birth so who will work during their pregnancy leave? Men also get married but they don't have to spend time for pregnancy and giving birth, maximum just one week off. Especially companies with foreign investment and industrial zones, they only recruit men, not women.

Female FGD, Ho Chi Minh city.

In the survey, the respondents were asked to state their level of knowledge regarding the three important sets of law related to gender equality in Viet Nam namely Gender Equality Law¹⁵⁴, Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence¹⁵⁵, and Law on Marriage and Family.¹⁵⁶

The results are featured in table 3.5.2, according to which, the rate of those who have never known/ or only heard about the names of these laws ranges from 40% to over 50%. The percentage of those who stated confidently that they knew well the content of the laws is quite low. (Table 3.5.2)

TABLE 3.5.2. **Level of knowing about law**

	Gender Equality Law	Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence	Law on Marriage and Family
I have never heard about this/ I don't know about this	23.74	10.29	9.07
I only know of the names but don't know the content	31.90	34.86	29.85
I know briefly	39.08	46.37	50.00
I know well the content	5.28	8.48	11.08
N	2,567	2,567	2,567

The findings show little improvement compared to prior research. In the ‘Social determinants of gender inequality’ research in 2015¹⁵⁷, for example, only 4.68% men knew well about Gender Equality Law, 6.33% about the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence, and 5.58% about the Law on Marriage and Family.

In focused group discussions, many shared that they never had the chance to access to these laws. A group in Hoa Binh, for instance, including some local authorities, stated:



To access these laws like Children Law, Law on Marriage and Family, Gender Equality Law... is extremely difficult. Even though there are programs from district to commune but they were never implemented. Even us as the local leaders of the villages and communes don't know much. I saw on TV so I know a bit but not much in details.

Female FGD, Hoa Binh.

154 Luật Bình đẳng giới được Quốc hội nước Cộng hòa Xã hội Chủ nghĩa Việt Nam khoá XII thông qua vào ngày 29 tháng 11 năm 2006 và có hiệu lực thi hành từ ngày 1 tháng 7 năm 2007.

155 Luật Phòng, chống bạo lực trong gia đình được Quốc hội nước Cộng hòa Xã hội Chủ nghĩa Việt Nam khoá XII, kỳ họp thứ 2 thông qua vào ngày 21 tháng 11 năm 2007 và có hiệu lực thi hành từ ngày 01 tháng 7 năm 2008

156 Luật Hôn nhân và Gia đình Việt Nam mới nhất được Quốc hội nước Cộng hòa Xã hội Chủ nghĩa Việt Nam khóa XIII, kỳ họp thứ 7 thông qua ngày 19 tháng 6 năm 2014 và có hiệu lực thi hành ngày 1/1/2015.

157 ISDS (2015). Ibid.

Many commented that Viet Nam has many laws but the actual practice of law in real life is low and the law enforcement is not so strict:



In my opinion, the government published a lot of laws, but not many have gone into the real life of people. Despite the effort of communication through newspapers and TV and speakers, the people don't know much about law.

Basically the law enforcement of our society is still too soft. There is almost no use at all. For example, the husband and wife fight with each other, first you should separate them like to take the wife to the office of the commune or a social organisation, like how I learned, but in reality there is no such thing. Besides, the perpetrator is the husband but can't do anything to him. The police can invite him but he doesn't show up because he is not at home. There is no strict punishment for the wrong doing of the husband.

Male FGD, Khanh Hoa

To conclude, this section has highlighted the high prevalence of the deeply rooted traditional gender-biased norms on women and men in the mentality of Vietnamese men. These norms have dictated their thoughts on the roles, positions, capability, sexuality, and relationships of men and women, as well as act as possible uncovered reasons for the pressure and mental burden in the daily life. What is concerning is the popularity and consistency of these norms in men, which suggests the great challenges in shifting them. The research findings, nevertheless, have brought about new values and progressive perspectives on both men and women and their relationships. Moreover, this study has portrayed a lively picture of the simultaneous existence of both the old and new norms in each individual which leads to confusion and conflicts within the Vietnamese men. These conflicts could be the source for tension, what could result in violent acts and other negative behaviors. How to shift these negative norms is truly a challenging mission.

3.6. Factors Influencing Gender Norms

In this section we present the analysis of factors influencing the notion of 'true man', the factors influencing gender norms and the association between gender norms and negative attitudes and practices among men.

3.6.1. Factors influencing the notion of 'true man'

In order to identify factors influencing Vietnamese men's notion of 'true man', we applied linear regression with 'a true man' being dependent variable and independent variables being demographic characteristics, property ownership or use, level of globalisation, participation in social activities (being member of informal groups), experience of violence during childhood,

witnessing violence during childhood, and exposure to gender norms during childhood. The variable of 'a true man' was created from 19 qualities of a 'true man' from the factor analysis described in section 3.3.3. The variable witnessing men having violent acts or risky behaviours before 18 years old was created from the mean of variables namely witnessing men beating or having violent acts towards women, men shouting or insulting women, men using alcohol/addictive, men shouting or abandoning children, men committing affairs outside marriage. The variable of witnessing women having violent acts or risky behaviours before 18 years old was created from the mean of similar variables with the perpetrators being women.

The results of regression analysis are presented in table 3.6.1. According to the analysis, age, urban living, education, property ownership/ usage, level of globalisation, social participation (in groups), experience of violence during childhood, norms on masculinity heard before 18 years old, and norms on femininity heard before 18 years old, are the variables that significantly associated with the variable 'true man'.

In term of demographic variables, the higher the age of a man the more criteria he ascribes to the 'true man' ($B=0.16$, $p=0.00$). Perhaps the economic and social progresses together with exposure to diverse cultures in the process of globalisation have posed positive impact on the Vietnamese men's perceptions, thus younger men's notion of the 'true man' have less traditional criteria of masculinity than that of men in older cohorts. In other words, to younger generation, masculine stereotypes tends to be fading out or less rigid. Urban men have fewer criteria for the 'true man' than rural men ($B=-0.05$, $p=0.01$). The higher educational level a man has ($B=-0.11$, $p=0.00$) and the more property he owns/uses ($B=-0.09$, $p=0.00$), the fewer criteria he ascribes for the 'true man.' Men who are more globalised (through the use of foreign languages, experience living and working abroad, usage of Internet) also have fewer criteria ($B=-0.09$, $p=0.00$). Urban living, higher educational level, higher living standard (through property usage/ ownership), and being globalised may result in positive impacts on men's perceptions that weaken traditional masculine norms they are holding. The more men participate in groups including classmate/veteran groups, career groups, and hobby groups, the more criteria they have on the 'true man' ($B=0.05$, $p=0.02$). Peer pressure in these groups may be the explanation for this finding.

Experiences during childhood have influence on men's notion of the 'true man'. Men who were shouted at or physically hurt by parents, siblings or relatives ascribe more criteria for the 'true man' ($B=0.06$, $p=0.01$). Men who often heard about gender-biased perceptions before 18 years old have more criteria for the true man (Masculine norms: $B=0.16$, $p=0.00$; Feminine norms: $B=0.08$; $p=0.00$). It appears that the notion of 'true man' of adult men are influenced by gender norms that men internalised from childhood. What is interesting is that norms of femininity that men were exposed to during childhood also have correlation with the perceptions on the 'true man' of adult men. This means that the norms are binary, once the feminine norms internalised, it is so with norms of the other gender.

TABLE 3.6.1. Results from regression analysis between factors related to a true man

Variables	A true man Adjusted R ² = 0.13	
	Beta standardise	p
1 Age	0.16	0.00*
Ethnicity	0.00	0.96
Urban (vs rural)	-0.05	0.02*
Education	-0.09	0.00*
Personal income	-0.01	0.66
Property usage/ ownership	-0.07	0.01*
Participation in globalisation	-0.09	0.00*
Participation in groups/ clubs	0.05	0.02*
Experience of being shouted at or physically hurt by parents, siblings, or relatives before 18 years old	-0.06	0.01*
Experience of being bullied/ shouted at/ physically hurt by others before 18 years old	-0.03	0.14
2 Witnessed men having violent acts before 18 years old	-0.02	0.43
Witnessed women having violent acts before 18 years old	0.01	0.70
3 Exposure to gender norms on masculinity before 18 years old	0.16	0.00*
Exposure to gender norms on femininity before 18 years old	0.08	0.00*

*p < 0.05. Note: Beta standardise and Adjusted R² from model 3. Ethnicity (0= Others, 1=Kinh)

3.6.2. Factors influencing gender norms

Linear regression analysis was applied with the dependent variable of 'Gender norms' to discover factors influencing Vietnamese men's perception on men and women. The independent variables include demographic characteristics such as age, ethnicity (Kinh-non-Kinh), education attainment, level of globalisation, property ownership, social participation, experience and witnessing of violence and exposure to gender norms before the age of 18. The variable of witnessing men having violent acts or risky behaviours before 18 years old was created from the mean of variables namely witnessing men beating or having violent acts towards women, men shouting or insulting women, men using alcohol/additives, men shouting or abandoning children, men conducting sexual affairs outside marriage. The variable of witnessing women having violent acts or risky behaviours before 18 years old was created from the mean of similar variables with the perpetrators being women.

Table 3.6.2 describes the results of linear regression analysis with gender norms. The analysis was conducted separately for masculine norms and feminine norms. The variable of masculine norms is generated from the mean of the 12 norms of women from factor analysis presented in Table 3.4.12. Similarly, the variable of feminine norms is also created from the mean of the 11 norms of men presented in Table 3.4.15.

Age has a strong correlation with gender norms. The older the men are, the more influenced they are by masculine norms ($B=0.06$, $p=0.00$) and on women ($B=0.07$, $p=0.00$). Similar to the notion of 'true man', the impacts of positive social changes over time can weaken masculine norms.

Men of Kinh ethnicity support more masculine norms than those in other ethnic groups ($B=0.04$, $p=0.00$), however in contrast, the Kinh men are less influenced by feminine norms on women than those in other ethnic groups ($B= -0.04$, $p=0.00$).

Men with high educational level and more property have less feminine norms ($B= -0.05$, $p=0.00$). It appears that high educational level and better economic condition could be factors contributing to the weakening of gender norms.

Influence of globalisation also weaken masculine norms ($B=-0.06$, $p=0.00$). The frequent participation in social groups/ clubs strengthen masculine norms ($B=0.03$, $p=0.05$), peer-pressure could be the reason for such finding.

Similar to the notion of 'true man', experience of being shouted at or physically hurt by family during childhood has correlation with support for masculine norms ($B=0.03$, $p=0.05$). Witnessed men having violent acts before 18 years old related with more masculine norms ($B=0.04$, $p=0.03$) and less feminine norms ($B=-0.05$, $p=0.00$). The current feminine norms is also statistically associate with current masculine norms ($B= 0.77$, $p=0.00$). Likewise, current masculine norms has correlation with current feminine norms ($B= 0.74$, $p=0.00$).

TABLE 3.6.2. **Linear regression results of factors related to gender-biased norms**

Variables		Gender norms on men		Gender norms on women	
		Adjusted R ² = 0.64		Adjusted R ² = 0.65	
		Beta standardised	p	Beta standardised	p
1	Age	0.06	0.00*	0.02	0.10
	Ethnicity (Kinh)	0.04	0.00*	-0.04	0.00*
	Areas (Urban)	-0.02	0.23	-0.01	0.71
	Educational level	-0.01	0.67	-0.05	0.00*
	Personal income	-0.01	0.65	0.01	0.34
	Property usage/ ownership	0.00	0.96	-0.05	0.00*
	Participation in globalisation	0.00	0.87	-0.06	0.00*
	Participation in groups/ clubs	0.03	0.05*	0.00	0.72
2	Experience of being shouted at or physically hurt by parents, siblings, or relatives before 18 years old	0.03	0.05*	-0.01	0.31
	Experience of being bullied/ shouted at/ physically hurt by others before 18 years old	-0.02	0.30	0.01	0.44
	Witnessed men having violent acts before 18 years old	0.04	0.03*	-0.05	0.00*
	Witnessed women having violent acts before 18 years old	0.00	0.99	0.02	0.31
3	Exposure to gender norms on masculinity before 18 years old	0.03	0.14	0.03	0.07
	Exposure to gender norms on femininity before 18 years old	0.02	0.19	0.02	0.33
	Current perception on men	-	-	0.74	0.00*
	Current perception on women	0.77	0.00*	0.02	0.10

* $p<0.05$
 * $p<0.05$
 Note: Standardised Beta and Adjusted R² from model 3.
 Ethnicity (0=Others, 1=Kinh)

Analysis of influencing factors on Vietnamese men's notion of true men and influencing factors on gender norms shows that urban living, high educational level, better economic condition, and participation in globalisation are likely to be factors that weaken gender norms and fade out traditional criteria of the 'true men' of Vietnamese men.

Experience of being shouted at or physically hurt by family during childhood strengthen the notion of 'true man' and masculine norms. The masculine norms that men were exposed to during childhood predict their current norms. Furthermore, gender norms are binary, thus to shift norms on one gender would also lead to changes in the norms on the other gender, and to change norms on both genders together will bring about more comprehensive and sustainable changes.

3.6.3. The association between the notion of "true man" and gender norms with negative attitudes and behaviours of men

This section discusses about the association between the notion of 'true man' and gender norms with some negative attitudes and behaviours of men such as risk behaviours, controlling and violence against intimate partners, forcing sexual activities, mental health, and son preference of Vietnamese men. Linear regression analysis is applied to examine this association.

The dependent variable is the frequency of risk behaviours, frequency of controlling/violence against intimate partners, frequency of forcing sexual activities on partners, and the level of support towards son preference. Independent variables include demographic characteristics, globalisation level, social participation (in groups/ clubs), experience of violence during childhood, witnessing violence during childhood, the notion of 'true man,' and gender norms.

The variable of the frequency of risk behaviours was created from the sum of six variables including smoking, drinking to drunkenness, gambling, engaging in fights using weapons, using addictive substances, administrative violation, and detention for violating the law.

The variable of the frequency of forcing sexual activities on partner was created from the sum of six variables including forcing partner to get pregnant/ abortion, forcing partner to watch pornography, forcing partner to have some kind of sexual activities, forcing partner to have sexual intercourse, forcing partner to use contraceptives, not allowing/refusing the use of condom in sexual activities.

The variable of the frequency of controlling/ violence towards partner was created from the sum of six variables namely to check partner's phone/ email/ messages, not allowing partner to communicate with people in the other sex, not allowing certain ways of dressing, constantly demanding updates from partner, insulting, physical violence (slapping/pushing/hitting).

The variable of the level of support towards son preference was created from five variables, in particular to have a son is very important, it is up to women to have sons or daughters, must have son for ancestor worshipping/ lineage continuing, must have son to take care of parents in old age, must have son to inherit family's possession).

The variable of witnessing men having violent acts or risky behaviours before 18 years old was created from the means of variables namely witnessing men beating or having violent acts towards women, men shouting or insulting women, men using alcohol/additives, men shouting or abandoning children, men conducting sexual affairs outside marriage. The variable of witnessing women having violent acts or risky behaviours before 18 years old was created from the medium of similar variables with the perpetrators being women.

Linear regression results are presented in table 3.6.3. Regarding the engaging in risk behaviours, the variables of age, educational level, and personal income appear to influence the frequency of risky behaviours in the 12 months prior to the research. Men in the Kinh ethnic group and with more property usage/ ownership engage in more risk behaviours. Experience of being shouted at or physically hurt by family before 18 years old has correlation with risk behaviours in adulthood ($B=0.11$, $p=0.00$).

In terms of controlling and violence against intimate partner, the older the men are the less they have controlling or violence acts against the partner ($B=-0.22$, $p=0.00$). The level of globalisation has correlation with controlling/ violence against intimate partner ($B=0.06$, $p=0.03$). The use of Internet and foreign languages and experience of living/ working abroad may increase the doubts against partners as men are exposed to more information on the negative sides of marriage/ relationship. Experience of violence from family and community and witnessing of men having violent acts against women before 18 years old predict the controlling/ violence against intimate partners of men in adulthood. Negative impacts of experience of violence during childhood has been confirmed in a study in Vietnam¹⁵⁸ as well as numerous studies worldwide.¹⁵⁹ The more masculine norms that a man has, the more he engages in controlling/ violence against his intimate partners ($B=0.10$, $p=0.01$). Many masculine norms may lead to high expectations of and striction on oneself and on others.

About forcing sexual activities on partners, regression analysis shows that the younger a man is, the less he forces his partners in sexual activities. Men who have experience being bullied/ abused before 18 years old tend to be more forcing toward their partners in sexual activities ($B=0.07$, $p=0.01$).

Regarding son preference, income, property usage/ ownership, and level of globalisation help to weaken son preference. Better economic condition and better access to information may help change the Vietnamese men's perception towards sons. Witnessing men having violent acts during childhood weakens son preference ($B=-0.05$, $p=0.03$), meanwhile witnessing women having violent acts during childhood increases son preference ($B=0.06$, $p=0.01$). Notion of the 'true man' image ($B=0.11$, $p=0.00$), masculine norms ($B=0.21$, $p=0.00$), and feminine norms ($B=0.22$, $p=0.00$) have correlation with the support for son preference.

158 Nhu K. Tran et al., "The Association between Child Maltreatment and Emotional, Cognitive, and Physical Health Functioning in Vietnam," *BMC Public Health* 17 (April 19, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-017-4258-z>.

159 Nicole L. Vu et al., "Children's Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence: A Meta-Analysis of Longitudinal Associations with Child Adjustment Problems," *Clinical Psychology Review* 46 (June 2016): 25–33, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2016.04.003>; Elizabeth T. Gershoff and Andrew Grogan-Kaylor, "Spanking and Child Outcomes: Old Controversies and New Meta-Analyses," *Journal of Family Psychology: JFP: Journal of the Division of Family Psychology of the American Psychological Association (Division 43)* 30, no. 4 (2016): 453–69, <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000191>.

TABLE 3.6.3. Regression results on the correlation between norms on 'true man image' and gender norms with risky behaviours and son preference

Variables		Gender norms on men		Gender norms on women	
		Adjusted R ² = 0.64		Adjusted R ² = 0.65	
		Beta standardised	p	Beta standardised	p
1	Age	0.06	0.00*	0.02	0.10
	Ethnicity (Kinh)	0.04	0.00*	-0.04	0.00*
	Areas (Urban)	-0.02	0.23	-0.01	0.71
	Educational level	-0.01	0.67	-0.05	0.00*
	Personal income	-0.01	0.65	0.01	0.34
	Property usage/ ownership	0.00	0.96	-0.05	0.00*
	Participation in globalisation	0.00	0.87	-0.06	0.00*
	Participation in groups/ clubs	0.03	0.05*	0.00	0.72
2	Experience of being shouted at or physically hurt by parents, siblings, or relatives before 18 years old	0.03	0.05*	-0.01	0.31
	Experience of being bullied/ shouted at/ physically hurt by others before 18 years old	-0.02	0.30	0.01	0.44
	Witnessed men having violent acts before 18 years old	0.04	0.03*	-0.05	0.00*
	Witnessed women having violent acts before 18 years old	0.00	0.99	0.02	0.31
3	Exposure to gender norms on masculinity before 18 years old	0.03	0.14	0.03	0.07
	Exposure to gender norms on femininity before 18 years old	0.02	0.19	0.02	0.33
	Current perception on men	-	-	0.74	0.00*
	Current perception on women	0.77	0.00*	0.02	0.10

*p<0.05
 *p< 0.05
 Note: Standardised Beta and Adjusted R² from model 3.
 Ethnicity (0=Others, 1=Kinh)

The influence of the notion of 'true man' and gender norms on men's mental health was tested using linear regression analysis. Dependent variable is mental health within the 12 months prior to the survey and was created from six variables about mental condition within the 12 months prior to the survey (feeling optimistic about the future, feeling happy, no complaints, not feeling lonely, not feeling bored, not thinking that life is a failure). Independent variables include demographic characteristics, globalisation, social participation in groups/ clubs, experience of violence during childhood, witnessing of violence during childhood, risky behaviours during the 12 months prior to the research, norms on true man image, and gender norms.

Regression analysis results (table 3.6.4) on the factors influencing mental health of Vietnamese men demonstrate that older men have better mental health (B=0.19, p=0.00). The more property usage/ ownership and participation in groups/ clubs also have positive correlation with mental health. Men living in urban areas have poorer mental health than those in rural areas (B=-0.09, p=0.00). Men who have more experience of being abused by others before 18 years old have poorer mental health (B=-0.10, p=0.00), likewise men who engage in more risk behaviours in the 12 months prior to the survey also have poorer mental health (B=-0.06, p=0.02). The notion of 'true man' and gender norms have no influence on mental health of Vietnamese men.

TABLE 3.6.4. **Regression analysis results on the correlation between norms on true man image and gender-biased norms with mental health**

Variable		Mental health	
		Adjusted R ² = 0.07	
		Beta standardised	p
1	Age	0.19	0.00*
	Ethnicity (Kinh)	-0.05	0.05
	Area (Urban)	-0.08	0.00*
	Educational level	-0.03	0.31
	Personal income	0.04	0.07
	Property usage/ ownership	0.11	0.00*
	Participation in globalisation	0.01	0.65
	Participation in groups/ clubs	0.05	0.03*
	2	Experience of being shouted at/ physically hurt by parents, siblings, relatives before 18 years old	0.00
Experience of being abused before 18 years old		-0.09	0.00*
Witnessing of men having violent acts before 18 years old		-0.01	0.69
Witnessing of women having violent acts before 18 years old		-0.03	0.34
Risky behaviours		-0.06	0.02*
3	Norms on true man image	0.04	0.22
	Current perception on men	-0.03	0.39
	Current perception on women	-0.03	0.51

*p<0.05

Note: Standardised Beta and Adjusted R² from model 3.

Ethnicity (0=Others, 1=Kinh)

In conclusion, analysis on factors influencing risky behaviours, mental health, and son preference indicates that high educational level and better economic condition are factors decreasing risk behaviours. Experience of violence from family and in the society before 18 years old predicts risk behaviours, controlling/ violence against partners, forcing sexual activities on partners, and negative mental health. Men who are in favour of masculine norms are more likely to engage in controlling/ violence against partners and have son preference. Notion of 'true man' and gender norms on both men and women support son preference of Vietnamese men.



4

Conclusions

This is the first large-scale study on men and masculinities in Viet Nam. The research findings have provided valuable knowledge on various aspects of the life of Vietnamese men, especially on how they are internalised and confined within the rigid traditional gender norms many of which negatively influence their perceptions and behaviours. These findings will contribute to the design of more effective interventions to create more positive changes contributing to the improvement of the quality of men's life, as well as to better involve the active participation of men in the collective effort to promote gender equality.

The key findings of the research and reflections on the rooms and opportunities for changes are summarised below.

Vietnamese men – a social profile

Work is the centre in men's life and is strongly associated with masculine norms, especially the expectations of them to fulfil their role as the family's pillar. Success or failure in a man's career dictates his pride and could pose huge negative impacts on his physical and mental health state, as well as his quality of life in general. Low income, few promotion opportunities, poor work conditions, and the shortage of employment opportunities among young men with high educational attainment are the problems causing serious pressures on a great number of Vietnamese men. Most Vietnamese men are in favour of 'traditional' jobs, such as government officers or as members of the police/army force, that are closely connected to the tradition of 'studying to be a mandarin' in the long past feudalist Viet Nam society. Younger people, however, prefer 'modern' kinds of job to the traditional ones, such as in IT, finance/banking, communication, and marketing.



Insight: *Policies on labour and employment need to pay attention to the association between work and masculinity to reduce men's pressure and mental health issues and to encourage men to achieve a balance between work and family life. For example, the policies and enforcement can be improved to provide full salary for a father off of work to take care of a sick child or flexible working time so men can share housework and other caring tasks with their wives. Good social insurance and social welfare schemes could help reduce pressure of temporary unemployment. There should also be policies and services supporting young men to find jobs, especially men from rural areas. Newly-wed couples and young families with small children should also be supported.*

Men are facing some concerning health issues, especially mental health and these are closely associated with masculine norms.

Men's health is conditioned not only by biological factors, but also cultural and social factors, especially those factors that shape their norms of masculinity. The findings of the research

revealed that Vietnamese men do not have the habit of frequent health checks. Men are currently facing some mental health issues, and one of the most alarming ones found is the pressure related to work and their role as the ‘family’s pillar’, especially in the young age group and in men with higher educational attainment. Men in the middle-age groups are often under the pressure of earning enough to cover costs of bringing up of their children and to pay education fees, which are getting more and more expensive. Urban men have to deal with mental health issues of the modern lifestyle such as feeling down, lonely, and disappointed. This issue appears to occur more in the young generation. To have suicidal thoughts and have attempted to commit suicide is also a perturbing problem in the 18-29 year-old men group. According to national statistics, the rate of suicide in men is higher than that in women and has continued to rise in recent years.¹⁶⁰ Traffic accidents is one of the many factors influencing the health of many men.

Having sex early, and having unsafe sex and with multiple partners are some issues in men’s sexual health. This study has found that 15% of men entered their sex life before the age of 18, which is higher compared to the rate of 13.6% recorded in SAVY 2 in 2009. The first sex encounter could happen at as young as 11 years old. One in every three men have sex with those who are not their wives or sexual partners, and this occurs more frequently in middle-aged men. In every 10 men who have extramarital sex, four (4) reported not using condoms.

Men have harmful practices that pose threats to their health and personal development.

Smoking and drinking to drunkenness are found to be quite common practices of Vietnamese men. Young men are more likely to engage in risk behaviours. In every 10 men aged 18-29, five have ever and/or currently are smoking, six have ever drunk alcohol to drunkenness, and four have ever violated the administrative laws. Drunk driving, not wearing a helmet while driving, and crossing a red light are popular acts of traffic violations found in men, mostly in the 18-29 age group.



Insight: *Many health issues and harmful practices of men are associated with biased masculine norms. The COVID-19 outbreak with high rates of men dying from infection is a strong illustration of this connection. Therefore, improving men’s health should not be by medical intervention alone. Shifting gender-biased norms that condition harmful practices and risk behaviours must be key interventions to be taken. Young men need to be supported to build a healthy lifestyle and positive behaviours through facilitation of more gender equality norms and practices.*

Men spend time on their issues of interest and hobbies: Young men are interested in new technologies (especially digital technology), international news, and social issues. Older men,

160 <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/VNM/vietnam/suicide-rate>

nonetheless, follow more news on domestic politics and the economy, environmental issues, climate change, and law enforcement. Many men, especially the young men in urban areas, spend time and money playing sports and doing physical exercise. Young men engage in the 'modern' hobbies more such as going to the gym, body building, playing computer games, and travelling, while older men prefer the 'traditional' hobbies including playing chess and raising bonsais/birds/fish.

Insight: *This represents an opportunity for creative and attractive communication campaigns to promote changes encouraging healthful lifestyles, and positive gender attitudes and practices. These communications could be integrated into the entertainment activities of urban men.*

Men actively take part in social life, which is their strategy to increase social capital and access diverse social resources. Nonetheless, as shown by other studies, men gathering could also be the venues where the traditional gender-biased norms are strengthened, and harmful practices are perpetuated. Men with higher educational attainment tend to participate more in social-political organisations compared to those with lower educational attainment. Urban men are more active in career groups/clubs than their rural counterparts. Men under 40 years old join in the hobby groups more, whereas over 40-year-old men prefer peer groups. Drinking alcohol and smoking are common among 18-29 year old men during their meet-ups/gatherings.

Insight: *The social networks that men participate can be the venue where negative masculine norms are reinforced and harmful practices such as drinking and smoking to take place. However, the same venues and peer networks can be good channels to introduce and facilitate positive gender norms and practices.*

Gender socialization

Exposure to violence and to the norms and practices of gender inequality during childhood strengthen traditional masculine norms among men. The research found that many men were exposed as young boys to the gender-biased norms through education from adults and from witnessing gender-biased practices in their family and community. As young boys, they saw their mother and other women shoulder most housework and caring tasks without or with minimal help from their fathers and other adult men. When they were young boys few of them helped doing housework. During their childhood, many men were victims of violence perpetrated by adults in their own family or in the community. They also often witnessed violence in their

family where the victims were mainly women. Research findings also indicate the masculine norms that men were exposed to during childhood predict their current gender norms.



Insight: *Positive gender socialization should be introduced in early childhood. While changing their family and the community surrounding children takes time, school and media should become key channels in communication and education of positive ideas and gender equality norms.*

Gender inequality is manifested in many aspects of men's family lives. Although the tendency of co-ownership of family assets is becoming more popular, compared to women, men are more likely the sole owner of property/assets in many families, and this is more common in rural areas. Young men have fewer assets, but they intend to share ownership with their wives. Men are the decision maker for important issues in many families while women decide for daily living activities. The tendency of making decisions together happens more in young urban families. The 'traditional' labour-division in the family continues to be prevalent where women shoulder most "internal" tasks including household chores and caring for family members, while men undertake "external" tasks such as representing the family in the community or kindship events. Young men in urban areas, nevertheless, are more likely to share housework and caring activities. Men are more likely to commit physical and mental violence against their wives/partners, however the issue of men being physically and mentally abused by their wives/partners has also been found among the men aged 18-29.



Insight: *These findings are not new, they reaffirm the findings of previous studies and show that shifting gender norms and practices toward more equal ones is challenging work and takes time, and changing gender labour division in the family is the hardest part and requires diverse and innovative interventions.*



Opportunity: *The norms and practices supporting gender equality have been observed in young men, especially among urban men. They are willing to share the ownership of property/assets with their wives, to discuss and make decisions together about important matters in the family, and undertake more household work and caring tasks. Intervention programs to encourage these practices may start with young urban men before scaling up to other groups of men.*

Typical characteristics of Vietnamese men and a “true man”

Typical characteristics of Vietnamese men in men’s thoughts include both positive and negative sides. In term of the positive side, men always place their family in the centre of their life, playing their role as its pillar and striving for a stable life for their family by doing jobs that bring good income so that they can ensure the future of their children. Other positive qualities of men include paying filial piety to their parents and being responsible toward people around them. On the other side, Vietnamese men have been portrayed as patriarchal, ‘being obsessed about keeping face’ and ‘liking to gather and drink’.

The notion of a ‘true man’ fits completely with the traditional stereotypes of men. Regarding his career, a true man prioritises his career, values education and degrees, strives to become a member of the Communist Party and have high position in the government, occupies a highly-skilled job, and tries to become a leader and the decision maker. In terms of capability and personality, the true man has a strong body, is competent in using modern technology, has wide social networks, has a strong and decisive mannerism, dares to take risks and challenges, is mentally strong, does not show weakness, and knows to drink alcohol well. In regards to sexuality, the true man has a strong sexual ability, has rich a sexual experience, and is always the one who initiates and leads in sexual activities. On family duties, the true man is married and having children, is the family’s pillar who earns enough to provide for his wife and children, and is responsible for ancestor worshipping.



Insight: *These findings are very interesting and important both academically and pragmatically, and need to be investigated in-depth in future studies on men and masculinities in Viet Nam. It appears that ‘a true man’ is a version of the hegemonic masculinity in the contemporary Vietnamese society. The traditional norms of a ‘true man’ need to be changed to free men from the norms that are causing burden for themselves and posing barriers for the advancement of women and gender equality.*

Expectations toward women and men

The common expectations of women revolve around their primary role as a housewife and caretaker. In terms of their roles, women are expected to do housework, take care of their family and be the strong support for their husband’s career growth, to accept suffering and sacrifice to keep their family happy, to prioritise caring for family over striving for career, to dedicate fully to a husband’s family, to satisfy husbands sexually, to do simple and easy work, and to be modest in a manner to avoid attracting attention from other men. In terms of capability, women are believed to be too emotional and inconsistent in work and incapable of working under high pressure. In terms of their sexuality, women are no longer condemned for extramarital affairs

or having multiple sexual partners, but they are blamed for being sexually harassed or abused.

Men prefer a wife with traditional qualities. A good wife is ‘willing to suffer and sacrifice for the family’, ‘always listens and agrees with husband’, ‘devotes more time to family, and is ‘hardworking and handles housework well’. Although the traditional gender norms are still common among Vietnamese men, there is a shift toward more positive perceptions among young men and urban men. In all three aspects of women’s capability, emotional relationship, and family and sexual life, the younger the man, the less biased he is against women and the less influenced he is by gender norms.

The common expectations of men are strongly linked to their superiority. These are beliefs that centre around men’s roles and capability, their position in the family and in their relationships with women, specifically men’s accepted conduct and men’s sexuality. Regarding men’s role and capability, men are believed to be better leaders than women, better at politics than women, more competent than women, and the main decision maker. Regarding men’s accepted conduct: it is understandable and acceptable for men to have affairs outside marriage, and it is normal for men to have multiple sexual partners and to flirt with women.

Men’s attitude and expectations toward their sons and daughters are also rooted in their gender-biased norms. Son preference is still popular among men as they are still holding the belief in an irreplaceable role of sons in ancestor worshiping, continuing family lineage, and caring for parents at old age. For their sons, men prioritise education and jobs that bring high income. For their daughters, priorities are family and jobs that bring less pressure and allow more time for the family. Men intend to give land and house equally to sons and daughters but one-fifth intend to give these assets only to sons or mainly to sons.



Positive sign: *Younger men in the two age groups of 18-29 and 30-39 and men with higher education level are less likely to value these traditional qualities than men of older age groups and those in groups with lower education levels.*

Men understand what gender equality is and can articulate the concept with examples but say it is hard to achieve in reality, and admit that not all of them practise it in their families. Younger men tend to appreciate the importance of gender equality more and are more likely to practise it in their families. Very few men reported having good knowledge of three gender-related laws, namely Law on Gender Equality, Law on Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence, and Law on Marriage and Family.



Insight: *The beliefs and stereotypes of men and women are deeply rooted in the biological essentialist point of view that capability, personality, quality, and conduct of men and*

women are predetermined by nature and are unchangeable. What is concerning is that these norms are prevalent across all social groups of men and persist in the thoughts of generations of men in Viet Nam, and continue to pose harm to men and women, and hinder the effort of gender equality promotion.

To shift these traditional gender-biased norms is not easy and requires long amounts of time, as biological essentialism is a dominant point of view in official educational philosophy and social science in Viet Nam and has rarely been challenged. This view is also widely diffused in popular culture and reinforced everyday by mass media and in public communications. Thus, superiority and privileges of men over women, as well as gender inequality are seen as inevitability, and thus are widely accepted.

Implications of Covid-19

The first cases of COVID-19 were officially reported on December 31, 2019, and by mid-May 2020, there have been nearly 5 million people worldwide infected with the virus, and more than 320,000 people have died. The socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic are serious and varied for women and men. ILO estimates that total or partial lockdown measures affects 2.7 billion workers, accounting for 81% of the worldwide workforce. The IMF projects a severe decline in the global economy. COVID-19 will cause the world economy to experience an unprecedented recession.¹⁶¹ In Viet Nam, the most recent survey of the Development Board of Private Economic sector (Board IV) with over 1,200 businesses assessing the impact of COVID-19 showed that if COVID-19 lasted for 6 months, 74% of the business are likely to go bankrupt. Statistics from the Business Registration Administration (Ministry of Planning and Investment) show that in the first two months of the year, there were 16,151 enterprises that temporarily suspended business, up to 19.5% over the same period last year, and 2,807 enterprises completed the procedure for dissolution.¹⁶²

Although our study on men and masculinities in Viet Nam was completed before COVID-19 occurred, its results had many implications regarding the health, social, and economic impacts of the pandemic not only to men but also to women and to gender equality in general.

Implication on men's health: According to Lancet, there are not enough data to confirm whether women or men are more infected with virus, but it is certain that men account for the majority of deaths since the outbreak of the epidemic. The scientists suggest that the adverse effects of COVID-19 seem to be associated with a number of underlying diseases such as hypertension,

161 Kirzinger et al., (2 April 2020) KFF Health Tracking Poll - Early April 2020: The Impact Of Coronavirus On Life In America. Retrieved 27 April 2020 at <https://www.kff.org/health-reform/report/kff-health-tracking-poll-early-april-2020/>

162 <http://trungtamwto.vn/su-kien/15086-kinh-te-viet-nam-va-the-gioi-duoi-bong-ma-covid-19>, accessed 16/5/2020

cardiovascular disease, and lung disease. These diseases are more common in men and are related to smoking and drinking - behaviours related to masculine norms.¹⁶³

Our study points out that Vietnamese men, especially the young group, could be more prone to the risk of infection as many of them engage in harmful practices such as smoking and drinking alcohol and rarely go for health checks.

Also, the study shows that Vietnamese men have a strong sense of their role as pillar of the family and their responsibility to ensure a stable life for the family. The findings of the study revealed that many men are currently facing several mental health issues, and one of the most serious ones is caused by work/money pressure, which is related to their role as the family's pillar, especially among young age group and men with higher educational attainment. The outbreak of COVID-19 may exacerbate this issue. For those who lose their jobs and live paycheck by paycheck, the crisis really puts a huge burden on them, which in turn negatively affects their mental health. In turn, mental health issues and psychological stress due to being unable to fulfil their role of pillar can cause men to engage in negative practices such as drinking, using drugs and risky behaviours, or increasing violence against spouse or partner.

In regards to the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic: Although both men and women are affected by the pandemic, the way it affects women and men varies widely. The most recent studies on the gender effects of COVID-19 show that this pandemic increases gender inequality and exacerbates the gender-based violence that existed before the outbreak. Measures to respond to pandemics such as lockdown at home, home schooling of children, working online ... can double or triple the burden of women's unpaid work and increase the risk of violence from husbands or intimate partners.¹⁶⁴ There are, however, some studies showing positive signs of a more equitable redistribution of labour, as men and boys are more likely to help with housework since the outbreak of COVID-19. In a quick assessment by UNWOMEN in three Asian countries, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Pakistan, in April 2020, more than half of the women surveyed said their husbands helped more with housework, while 33 to 85% (depending on the country) said that their sons helps more with housework than before.¹⁶⁵

Our study on Vietnamese men has indicated COVID-19 could impact family relationships of men in many different ways. The traditional gender labour division - "men are responsible for outside matters and women are responsible for inside", is still quite common in Vietnamese society. Stories of women's double or triple burden during the lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic have been reported in mass media and widely shared in social media. The increase of domestic violence is reflected in the increase of calls to helplines and the number of cases when women had to seek shelter in the Peace House. However, the COVID-19 crisis may redefine

163 [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)30823-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30823-0/fulltext)

164 <https://www.nytimes-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/www.nytimes.com/2020/05/06/upshot/pandemic-chores-homeschooling-gender.amp.html> accessed 17/5/2020

165 <https://data.unwomen.org/resources/surveys-show-covid-19-has-gendered-effects-asia-and-pacific>, accessed 15/5/2020

the roles of men and women in the family. There are various stories of men sharing household chores and helping with childcare reported in the media. Some men shared that when they stayed at home for a long time, they witnessed the hard work of their wives/mothers and that made them more sympathetic to women. Some men actively participated in sharing the work burden and appreciated being at home with their wives and children.¹⁶⁶ One point to note here is that the pandemic has a differential impact on different groups of men. Our qualitative analysis has shown that younger men are more open to housework than older men, while older men still believe that housework is for women and men must be the breadwinner in the family. Staying at home challenges this perception of men, so they may be more resistant to change than those who already have an open mind. There are also cases in which the man in the family loses his job and has to stay at home while the woman still works and earns money. Prior to the pandemic, both of them worked and the woman was mainly in charge of the housework. But now, when only the woman works, the housework should be transitioned from the woman to the man.

In terms of intimate relationships with wives/partners, our study has pointed out that the controlling behaviour and domestic violence conducted by Vietnamese men still exists with noticeable percentages. Staying at home due to COVID-19 could aggravate this situation. Seeing and interacting with each other every day can increase the likelihood of conflict and dispute, which would in turn lead to verbal and physical violence between the wife and husband. Moreover, the increasing financial pressure caused by unemployment or a decrease in income can potentially trigger more conflicts and violence in the family.

Regarding family decision making, this study has figured out that a high percentage of Vietnamese men have a final say in the family's major expenditures while women play a decisive role in daily expenses. COVID-19 can challenge this norm in the sense that both wife and husband will need to make decisions together more so that the family can survive the crisis. Losing jobs or having less income, men will lose their perceived role as "family's pillar" or "breadwinner of the family". As a result, their decision-making power in the family will be weakened. Moreover, the pandemic really attacks many families' financial positions, and thus, both wife and husband need to discuss with each other carefully every issue and make every decision together so that the whole family can overcome depression.

The results of this study show that the proportion of men owning valuable household assets is many times higher than that of women. As we know, the COVID-19 epidemic has a detrimental economic impact on the nation when many businesses face the risk of shut-down and many people lose part of or all their income. Farmers also cannot sell their products, and some have to destroy the stock by themselves. Therefore, many men can lose their property ownership, especially production/business facilities, to pay for their debt or living. This in its turn could cause worries and tensions, triggering conflicts and violence in the family.

166 <http://laodongthudo.vn/lam-viec-online-hieu-qua-thoi-dich-benh-105396.html>, Accessed 17/5/2020

To summarize, it is noteworthy that, the impact of emergency health events like COVID-19 is gendered, as it impacts men and women differently. The obvious and serious consequences that COVID-19 has on men in terms of health, point out that many human health problems and disease are not solely related to biology but can also be conditioned by human behaviours, and therefore, they are not gender neutral. Gender norms and practices can expose men and women to various health problems and disease. This means that interventions for improving health and eliminating diseases should not be limited to medical interventions but also include social solutions. In the case of COVID-19, along with vaccines and medical treatment, an effective and sustainable measure lies in removing the masculine norms that lead to harmful practices such as smoking and drinking and promoting the norms which encourage healthy practices such as physical exercise, good hygiene, regular health checks, and compliance with preventive measures.

The different socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on men and women requires different approaches and measures to respond to the pandemic and mitigate its consequences to each gender. This in it turn requires understanding and taking into account the gender norms and practices which can exaggerate the negative impact of the pandemic or help to mitigate it. In-depth studies on the association of gender norms and impact of COVID-19 can help to formulate more practical solutions for addressing the consequences of the pandemic and provide recommendations for proactive measures to similar crises in the future.

Changing the gender norms and stereotypes that men are holding is possible

This study has pointed out that the notion of a “true man” and traditional gender norms negatively affect attitudes and behaviours of men. Those who are in favour of the notion of a ‘true man’ and traditional gender norms are more likely to hold gender-biased attitudes or engage in gender inequality practices such as son preference, controlling and violence against their wives/partners, forcing sexual activities on their wives/partners, and engaging in risk behaviours such as drinking to drunkenness, smoking, gambling, and using violence to handle conflicts.

This study has also identified opportunities for changes: Urban living, high educational attainment, improved economic condition, and globalisation are factors that can lessen gender norms and the notion of a ‘true man’, as well as risk behaviours.

To conclude, findings of this research suggest that shifting gender norms will go along with socio-economic processes and take a long time. Nevertheless, interventions focusing on young urban men with high education attainment who are beneficiaries and agents of globalisation, may bring positive results, which will be then diffused to other social groups. As gender norms are binary, to shift norms on one gender would also lead to changes in the norms on the other gender, and to change norms on both genders together will bring about more comprehensive and sustainable changes.

5

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Appendixes

TABLE A - 1. **Distribution of survey respondents by areas and provinces (%)**

Variables	Urban	Rural	Total	Number of respondents
Ha Noi	22.56	22.17	22.36	574
Hoa Binh	25.71	21.71	23.69	608
Khanh Hoa	21.37	18.86	20.10	516
Ho Chi Minh city	30.36	37.26	33.85	869
Total	49.40	50.60	100	2,567
N	1,268	1,299	2,567	

TABLE A - 2. **Social-demographic background of survey sample**

Variables	Urban	Rural	Total	Number of respondents
Age groups				
18-29	20.19	18.55	19.36	497
30-39	20.03	26.10	23.10	593
40-49	20.03	25.48	22.79	585
50-59	26.81	22.56	24.66	633
60+	12.93	7.31	10.09	259
Education				
Primary and lower	7.97	16.47	12.27	315
Secondary	30.60	38.72	34.71	891
High school	34.70	30.41	32.53	835
College and higher	26.74	14.40	20.49	526
Marital status				
Never married	21.45	14.40	17.88	459
Currently married	75.63	83.53	79.63	2,044
Separated/ Divorced	2.52	1.69	2.10	54
Widowed	0.39	0.38	0.39	10
Having children	75.79	82.99	79.43	2,039
Current place of residence				
Own accommodation	92.74	97.38	95.09	2,441
Rented accommodation	5.52	1.15	3.31	85
Borrowed accommodation	1.74	1.46	1.60	41
Currently living with				
No one else	2.84	1.46	2.14	55
Family	96.69	98.38	97.55	2,504
Others	0.47	0.15	0.31	8
Employment status				
Never worked	3.47	3.31	3.39	87
Used to work	22.63	15.32	18.93	486
Working	73.90	81.37	77.68	1,994

TABLE A - 3. Mean age of first marriage of the research sample

	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	Total
Living areas						
Urban	23.6	26.7	27.4	27.4	27.4	27.1
Rural	23	25.8	26.3	25.2	24.1	25.4
Education						
Primary and lower	21.8	24.7	24.6	24.9	23.9	24.6
Secondary	22	25.1	25.9	25.8	25.5	25.4
High school	23.4	26	27.8	27.5	27.1	26.7
College and higher education	24.8	27.7	29.8	27.9	28.1	28
Total	23.2	26.1	26.8	26.3	26.1	26.2

TABLE A - 4. Rate of men interested in some social issues by age group (%), N= 2,567

	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Economic, political, socio-cultural issues in Vietnam	51.51	61.72	60.34	66.51	67.95
Environment and climate change	35.81	33.22	39.83	39.81	44.79
Law enforcement	29.18	28.33	33.16	33.33	37.84
Social problems (drugs, gambling,...)	43.86	38.95	36.41	39.81	41.31
Education for young people	51.11	52.61	45.47	41.39	40.54
Health and medicine	49.3	50.08	48.38	42.81	42.08
Social violence	26.76	19.39	14.36	14.69	11.58
Culture and arts	24.55	11.8	11.45	8.37	6.18
International issues	9.46	5.56	4.44	6.48	6.95
Science and Technology	25.96	14.84	5.81	4.58	4.63
No concern at all	7.44	10.46	13.85	11.85	12.36
N	497	593	585	633	259

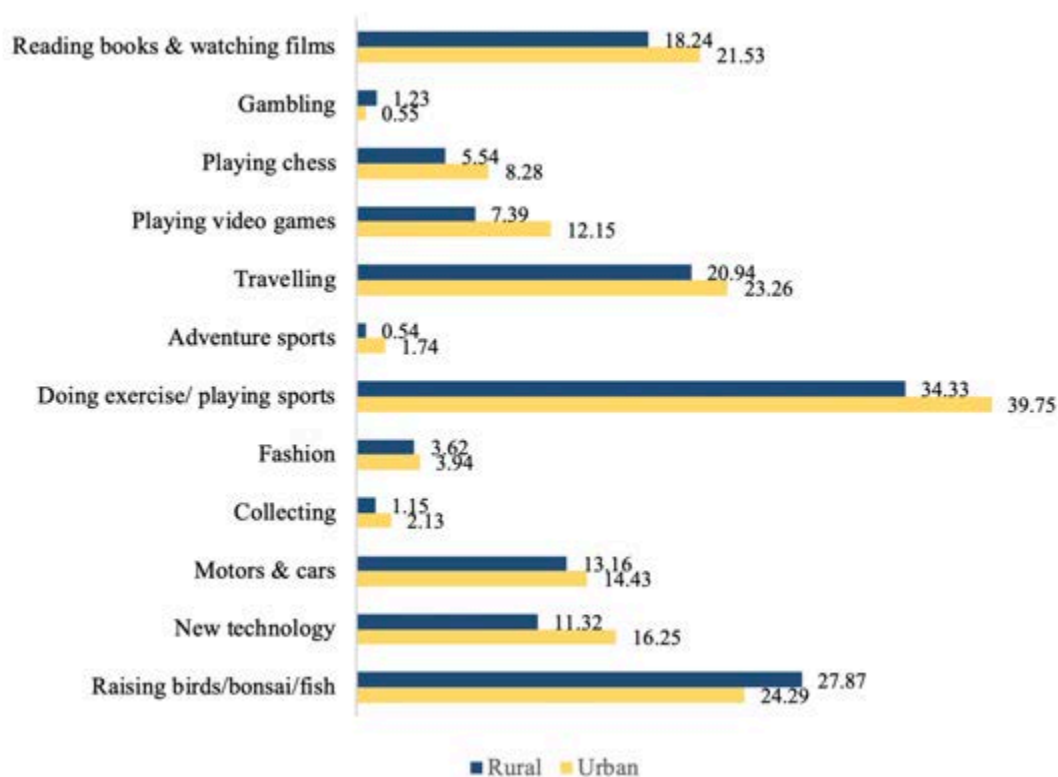
TABLE A - 5. Personal interests of men by age group (%), N=2,567

	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Raising birds/bonsai/fish	14.08	25.63	29.23	31.44	30.12
New technology	26.16	16.02	10.77	7.42	6.95
Motors & cars	23.54	19.9	11.62	6	5.02
Collecting	2.21	1.85	1.37	1.58	0.77
Fashion	12.27	3.2	1.37	1.11	0.77
Doing exercise/ playing sports	42.25	39.46	33.16	33.02	39.77
Adventure sports	3.02	0.84	0.68	0.63	0.39
Travelling	32.8	25.63	19.15	17.22	11.97
Playing video games	35.81	8.77	1.88	1.11	0.77
Playing chess	3.62	5.23	7.69	9.95	7.72
Gambling	0.8	1.01	0.85	0.95	0.77
Reading books & watching films	22.13	14.84	19.49	20.85	25.48
N	497	593	585	633	259

TABLE A - 6. Main purposes of men when using the Internet by age group (%), N= 1,688

	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Entertainment	64.36	46.09	49.11	43.71	46.53
Using social networks/ media	66.67	50	39.94	30.77	22.77
Updating news	39.41	62.14	71.3	77.62	85.15
Learning socio-cultural information	26	31.48	35.21	44.76	56.44
Socializing/ chatting with friends	41.09	24.28	15.98	18.18	7.92
Working to earn money	15.3	23.25	13.61	9.79	4.95
Shopping	3.77	1.85	0.89	1.4	0
Learning new knowledge	7.34	9.26	8.58	6.99	9.9
Making friends/ dating	2.73	0.82	0.59	0.35	0
Gambling	0.63	0.41	0.3	0	0
N	497	593	585	633	259

FIGURE A - 1. Personal interests of men by area (%), N=2,567



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