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# Knowledge and Prevalence of Sexual Grooming in Academia: Basis for Awareness Campaign

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## ABSTRACT

*This study critically examines the pervasive issue of sexual grooming within the academic sphere, with a specific emphasis on educators' awareness and knowledge. Despite the Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers advocating for a conducive learning environment, instances of violence, including sexual grooming, continue to afflict educational institutions. Drawing attention to reported cases from the Department of Education, the study reveals alarming statistics of verbal abuse, sexual abuse, and physical bullying. Of particular concern is the 2022 Vice News study exposing sexual exploitation and abuse of Filipino children by school staff and teachers, corroborated by local incidents reported on social media. This research aims to illuminate sexual grooming in academic settings, underscoring the imperative for awareness and preventive measures. The study is theoretically grounded in Ward and Sieger's Pathways Model, incorporating Finkelhor's Precondition Model, Marshall and Barbaree's Integrated Theory, and Hall and Hirschman's Quadripartite Model. This comprehensive framework provides a nuanced understanding of the psychological mechanisms at play in sexual grooming. To address gaps in educators' awareness, the study utilizes random sampling to assess 25 teachers from senior high and tertiary levels. A survey instrument, featuring closed and Likert scale questions, gauges respondents' knowledge of sexual grooming definitions, signs, and prevalence in academia. Aligned with the UNICEF report on child sexual violence, the study underscores the urgency of tackling such issues. The conceptual framework employs the input-process-output model, considering teachers' profiles, survey responses, and potential implications for an awareness campaign. The methodology incorporates a structured online questionnaire covering demographic information, knowledge assessment, training awareness, reporting procedures, and the perceived importance of addressing sexual grooming. By exploring educators' comprehension and experiences regarding sexual grooming, this research strives to contribute to a safer learning environment. The findings will inform targeted training programs and bolster child protection measures within educational institutions. As dedicated proponents of the Department of Education's mission, the study endeavors to bridge the awareness gap and foster child-friendly, secure, and motivating academic environments.*

## KEYWORDS

*Grooming; Groomer; Sexual Grooming; Academe; Awareness Campaign.*

## INTRODUCTION

As stated in the **Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers from the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) in Section I of Article III The Teacher and the Community**, *“A teacher is a facilitator of learning and the development of the youth; he shall, therefore, render the best service by providing an environment conducive to learning and growth.”*

But despite that, there are a concerning number of cases as provided by the **Department of Education’s Learner Rights and Protection Office (LRPO)** in which there were **77 filed reports of verbal abuse, 70 of sexual abuse, and 66 of physical bullying** all of which are violence involved. All three cases mentioned can be also aligned with another disturbing concern about sexual grooming.

In 2022, **Vice News** released a study regarding abuses conducted by school staff, their classmates, and especially teachers. It detailed that from ages 12 to 17 years old the 950 Filipino children surveyed were victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. It mentions non-consensual and coercion to engage in sexual activities in exchange for monetary and gifts.

In the same year, information shared by an X app user (formerly Twitter) said that there were students from **Bacoor National High School in Cavite** who shared their unfortunate experiences with the seven teachers. **DepEd Spokesperson Michael Poa** noted the allegations were **“very disturbing”** knowing that professional teachers were involved.

Particularly a place where the students should have an environment where they can feel safe and secure in which unfortunately the academe is not an exception. This is one of the many issues that we still have to constantly campaign against these perpetrators who are lurking in academia.

The term **Grooming** in **Merriam-Webster Dictionary** is a verb when someone is preparing for something. Meanwhile, in **Oxford references**, it is a type of behavior of a man or even a woman that manipulates a child to trust and be dependent on them in exchange for sexual favors. Hence, the term **Sexual Grooming**.

<sup>10</sup> **Shishira Sreenivas** (n/d) explained **sexual grooming** is when an adult begins a relationship with a child through manipulation. An individual who works his or her way to manipulate a child is a Groomer.

A **groomer** will give positive compliments, be friends with the vulnerable target, give money, and buy gifts to gain the victim's trust and eventually use this for sexual favors or coercion that might lead to verbal, physical, and emotional abuse.

<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the **National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children** explained that **“anybody can be a groomer, no matter their age, gender, or race”** educational institutions are not an exemption.

Children will unlikely have no impression that they are being groomed. These are some of the signs of grooming to watch out for:

1. A child is being secretive about whom they are spending time with, may it be personal or online

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