



Vietnamese Youth's Perception on Slut-Shaming on Social Media

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Abstract

“Slut-shaming” is common in Asian societies like Vietnam. The study aims to learn more about how people make judgments based on what they see on Facebook. We create a so-call “slut-shaming” interaction on Facebook, in which one woman calls another woman a “slut.” The interaction included a photograph of the target, in which she was dressed either “provocatively” or “conservatively.” Her visible Facebook profile information suggested she was part of either a lower or higher socioeconomic class. A total of 210 female students participated in a survey. The results were analyzed through three 2×2 MANOVAs to examine how the use of that term affects perceptions of both the “slut” and the “shamer” as well as how clothing choice and social class of the targets affect these judgments. The results show that participants generally had negative perceptions about the “shamer,” but social class and clothing influenced how women perceived both the “slut” and the “shamer.” This research provides a different angle on slut-shaming in social media and certain pivotal recommendations in order to prevent and avoid slut-shaming. Schools have a key role to play in addressing girls’ subordination in online activities.

Keywords Slut-shaming · Social media · Social class · Clothing

Introduction

The rise and widespread adoption of social media has allowed women to be victimized in new ways as they have public or semi-private online profiles (Citron, 2009; Goblet & Glowacz, 2021; Megarry, 2014). One study reported that 20% of women surveyed had experienced cyber harassment (Burke WinkelmAn et al., 2015). The Pew Research Center (Duggan, 2014) reported that young adults, and,

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more specifically, young women, are most often the targets of internet harassment, citing 50% of young, female respondents have been called offensive names online. One researcher documented the Twitter hashtag #mencallmethings, with which participants tweeted examples of online harassment they receive from men (Megarry, 2014); this harassment includes death and rape threats, “slut-shaming,” and appearance-related insults (Goblet & Glowacz, 2021). While public, online harassment allows online “bystanders” to know how the perpetrator feels about the target, it is unclear how those who witness such abuse feel about the offender and victim.

Slut-shaming is the act of publicly humiliating a woman based on her supposed sexual conduct and appearance, regardless of whether she is sexually active or not (Poole, 2013). Slut-shaming is a behavior that may occur in real-world or digital settings. Social networking sites, Facebook in the context of the research, have created a space where the slut-shaming phenomenon becomes something more common (Papp et al., 2017a, 2017b). Especially, the advantage of anonymity experienced by the offenders in the Internet is one of the elements contributing to the rising frequency of cyberbullying and slot shaming (Adewoye, 2022). Moreover, previous research suggests that Facebook interactions are the reflection of social reality in daily interactions (Kwan & Skoric, 2013). Several women have been labeled as “sluts” after uploading photographs of themselves in suggestive clothing on Facebook (Ayuningtyas & Kariko, 2019). Regardless of the context in which it occurs, slut-shaming can be classified as a form of (cyber)bullying that causes significant harm, including depressive and suicidal thoughts, difficulties in school and dropping out, relationship issues, and use of cigarettes, alcohol, or other drugs (Goblet & Glowacz, 2021).

Perceptions of “Slut-Shaming”

Little is known about perceptions of those targeted as a “slut” by others as well as perceptions of those who shame women’s presumed sexual behavior. While “slut-shaming” is popular both online and offline (Armstrong et al., 2014a, 2014b), people usually blame such behavior as unkind. Those who engage in so-called slut-shaming behavior may be perceived negatively by others. Research that focused on perceptions of an online “slut-shaming” incident illustrated that participants viewed “slut-shamers” negatively, particularly if the target of the humiliation was a woman (Leanna J. Papp et al., 2017a, 2017b). In addition, compared to male participants, female participants expressed a desire for greater social distance from the “shamer,” suggesting that women may be more critical of “slut-shaming.”

Historically, the term “slut” implies that the target lacks value and morality (Poole, 2013). It was originally a derogatory epithet used mostly to stigmatize lower-class women (Attwood, 2007). Men and women both used the term to disparage female maids in the eighteenth to twentieth centuries (Attwood, 2007). In this setting, it was not unusual for lower-class women employed in upper-class homes to be referred to as “sluts” when their male bosses sexually abused them. The word was used by upper-class women to denote their preference for their socioeconomic standing (SES) over their gender. In Vietnam, in the twentieth century, “slut”—which may

be translated in Vietnamese as “Con Đĩm/con đĩ”—is used to refer to people having low social status and prostitute “a female prostitute” (Hellinger & Bußmann, 2000). In order to slut a person who is believed as a “slut,” people may use words such as “slutful” (“dâm đĩng in Vietnamese). Nowadays, the term “slut” often implies “a low-class dirty girl” in Vietnam who involved direct sex-for-money exchanges (Kay Hoang, 2011). These factors created the conditions for women to denigrate other women with this term (Attwood, 2007). This study aims to apply such knowledge to the Vietnamese online context to answer understand how Vietnamese students view “slut-shaming” behavior, “slut,” and “slut-shamers,” and whether they want social distance from the “shamer”?

Other studies proved that characteristics of the woman being shamed may impact the level to which one views “slut- shaming” in a positive or a negative light. Among others, (a) dressing and (b) socioeconomic status are the two variables that may impact on person’s perception of “slut-shaming” (Leanna J. Papp et al., 2017a, 2017b).

Dressing in a provocative manner may precipitate “slut-shaming” (Leanna J. Papp et al., 2017a, 2017b). Vietnam adopted the Eastern culture in which women are said to be very non-revealing and self-assured while wearing formal office attire and displaying very little overt sexuality (Chen & Holden, 1999). However, Vietnam’s related laws do not reflect any of the mentioned cultural aspects. Specifically, Vietnam does not have a particular code of conduct about dressing. The term “thuần phong mỹ tục” means “the national fine traditions and customs” and is considered to be a vague term. Therefore, to consider whether a person is dressing inappropriately based on the Code of Conduct in Vietnam will be inadequate and subjective. Moreover, thanks to economic development, the rapid urbanization process, as well as social media development, one of the most dynamic cities in Vietnam, adolescents in Ho Chi Minh City have built a new aesthetic consciousness by creatively absorbing world cultural values and retaining the national cultural identity (Nguyen, 2022). Therefore, it is hard to set a fixed social standard to evaluate Vietnamese youth’s dressing as provocative or conservative. In this study, we will consider and evaluate a person’s clothing according to the definition of previous research articles that may not come from Vietnam. When a woman’s attire is referred to as being provocative and inappropriate, it often means that it is either too exposed, too tight, or perceived as sexually suggestive in the situation in which it is worn, specifically, attires that show a woman’s body shape and private parts, such as her breasts (Johnson et al., 2014; Lynch, 2007). Previous studies show that women’s clothing may act as a marker of sexual availability (Goetz et al., 2014), and women dressed in “sexy” attire are often judged harshly (Montemurro & Gillen, 2013). Vaillancourt (2013b) found that a confederate dressed in provocative attire spurred women to lash out with indirect aggression; participants rated a provocatively dressed confederate in their study as “bitchy” and stated that they would prefer not to have their partners hang out with her.

Although provocatively dressed women may not have any intention to attract sexual desire, they will still be attributed as such by both males and females, resulting in them getting “slut-shamed” (Leanna J. Papp et al., 2017a, 2017b). Vaillancourt and Sharma (2011) described a provocatively dressed confederate as “bitchy” and

said they would not want their boyfriends to spend time with her. They discovered that a confederate dressed in provocative clothing encouraged women to act aggressively in an indirect manner. Thus, it is hypothesized that people would see a “slut” negatively if she were photographed wearing provocative clothing as opposed to conservative apparel. It is also hypothesized that a “slut-shamer” would be judged less severely and that the “slut-shaming” phenomenon would be perceived as more justified if the woman being humiliated was dressed provocatively as opposed to conservatively.

The second factor that may impact the perceptions of “slut-shaming” is socioeconomic status (SES). Previous studies show that “slut-shaming” may reflect its roots of classism (Armstrong et al., 2014a, 2014b). Wealth, education, and employment are the defining characteristics of socioeconomic status (Citron, 2009). It has been researched that social standing does have an impact on one’s perception (Conway et al., 1996). Therefore, we hypothesize that the “slut” who wears provocative attire with low SES would be viewed more negatively, and the “slut-shamer” would be judged less harshly if the victim seemed to be of lower social status.

Motivation of Slut-Shaming

Although, in some contexts, men may be disparaged for their sexual behavior (e.g., be referred to as a “man-whore” or “man-slut”), women receive the bulk of “slut-shaming” (Ringrose & Renold, 2012) (Bamberg, 2004). Women are both potential receivers and creators of sexual stigma, engaging in both defensive and repressive othering at the same time (Elizabeth A. Armstrong et al., 2014a, 2014b). In Vietnam, female students are more likely than male students to be victims of cyberbullying (Ho et al., 2020).

There are two theories as to why slut-shaming occurs between females. Firstly, Darwin’s theory of sexual selection suggested that for resources related to reproduction, people compete fiercely with other members of their sex (Frost, 2022). Specifically, women will feel threatened when they are faced with another woman who dresses more revealingly because they perceive these women to have the attention of men (Baumeister & Twenge, 2002). To compete for mates, women are thought to be less likely than men to use physical violence; therefore, they use other tactics to downgrade potential rivals such as slut-shaming (Leanna J. Papp et al., 2017a, 2017b). This leads to the second hypothesis, which is the self-esteem hypothesis. It suggested that women engage in “slut-shaming” activities of other women to enhance their self-esteem. Those who “slut-shame” others may consider them to have violated social norms and be deemed undesirable. While those who do not violate are considered “good” women because their behavior is consistent with gender norms (Baumeister & Twenge, 2002; Vaillancourt, 2013b).

“Slut-shaming” may also result from the internalization of stereotyped norms of gender and a desire to punish women who violate these norms. Women may be shamed for not conforming to social norms that usually apply to women (Clayton & Trafimow, 2007; Jost, 2001; Poole, 2013), especially those of both modesty and fidelity, two constructs that signify the valuing of women’s monogamy and sexual

abstention (Mahalik et al., 2005). Further, sex is expected to be tied to love or emotion for women, and casual sexual activity suggests there is not an emotional connection driving the action (Gologorsky, 1999). To the extent that these norms are internalized, other women may believe that “slut-shamed” women deserve it, despite the fact that the normalization of “slut-shaming” puts them at risk of being targeted next.

In Vietnam, calling a woman a “slut” is a popular insulting phrase. The purpose of this study was to investigate how Vietnamese young people perceive “slut” and “shamer” in relation to the term’s online usage, as well as how the targets’ dress choices and socioeconomic status influence these impressions. The following are the research questions: (1) How do young Vietnamese people see slut-shaming, and how do they perceive “slut” and “shamer” on social media? and (2) What factors influence the acceptability of “slut-shaming”?

To answer the first two research questions, we manipulate two variables: the target’s socioeconomic level and clothing choices (Baumeister & Twenge, 2002; Vaillancourt, 2013a). We postulated that a “slut” with a lower socioeconomic status (SES) and provocative attire would be viewed more negatively than her counterpart with a higher SES and conservative attire. Additionally, we predicted that participants would view the “slut-shamer” more adversely if she shamed a high SES/conservatively dressed “slut” as opposed to a low SES/provocatively dressed “slut.”

Finally, we wanted to investigate (3) whether, on the whole, people would interpret a “slut-shaming” remark as judgmental (implying that it was driven by a desire to keep an eye on conformance to gender roles) or jealous (implying that it was driven by intersexual competition). In the following part, the authors described the methodology and research design, which successfully tested in previous studies (Leanna J. Papp et al., 2017a, 2017b).

Method

Participants

We asked 210 female students at a private University in Vietnam, where over 35,000 students studying, to take part in our survey. The participants were 20.38 years old on average (standard deviation = 1.13). More than half of the participants said their conservators were lower-middle class (58.1%) and upper-middle class (19%); the remaining were upper class (8.6%), low class (13.8%), and retired (0.5%).

Procedure

Participants over the age of 18 were invited to participate in a random survey on the university campus. We also emailed four survey forms to several students. They were surveyed by completing the provided online questionnaire. The survey link was generated and hosted by Google Forms. Except for the Facebook post that was

viewed, the survey was the same for all participants. Participants who completed the survey would receive a set of IELTS English practice materials.

This study was to understand how students make judgments about “slut-shaming” behavior based on what they see from Facebook content. We made it a priority to keep participants’ information private to give them a sense of security. Participants also noticed that they only conducted surveys once. Following consent, participants were assigned at random to one of four conditions: provocative/high SES, provocative/low SES, conservative/high SES, and conservative/low SES. Participants answered questions about their perceptions of the people involved (slut and shamer) based on their interpretation of the conversation after viewing the Facebook screenshot attached to the survey.

Materials

Screenshots of the Facebook Conversations

Because the questions in the survey were taken from international sources, to help the participants understand the questions easily and accurately, we applied the translation method to translate our questionnaires from English to Vietnamese, as well as caption and comment on the Facebook post. In this method, we synthesized the questions and translated them into Vietnamese; then, we had an English teacher who graduated with a Bachelor of English Education translate them into English to examine whether that person accurately understood the questionnaires in Vietnamese. We repeated this process twice and got the Vietnamese questionnaires that most closely matched the original.

We created a Facebook conversation using a simulated Facebook post. Each post included three fiction accounts, a photo, a caption, and a comment. In all conditions, captions and comments were the same.

To describe the character “Hoang Thuy” [8], the caption was written as follows: “Thật vui khi em Thùy có mặt tối nay [heart][heart]” (So glad Jessica could join us last night [heart]) with the attached picture and the comment “Tôi qua tôi đã thấy em ấy, nhìn “đâm đặng” lắm” (Saw her last night ... so lustful). We have blurred the profile picture, friend info, photo, and date for the sake of creating a sense of protecting the privacy of real Facebook users.

To show the socioeconomic status of “Hoang Thuy,” we published information about the work and education. Accordingly, “Hoang Thuy” with a profile that she is a student at the Ho Chi Minh City University of Law with an internship at City Court would be considered as the high SES target (Fig. 1). Meanwhile, if Hoang Thuy is a student attending a vocational college and working as a waitress in a casual restaurant, she is a low SES target (Fig. 2). Because “Hoang Thuy’s” face was blurred in both photos, the participant could guess her age based on the profile provided. The photo showed “Hoang Thuy” dressed provocatively (with a deep-cut two strapped dress). The other photo showed “Hoang Thuy” dressed conservatively (with a long-sleeved dress that covers her chest and reaches her knees). As a result, we came up with the following four conditions: (1) provocative attire/high SES, (2)

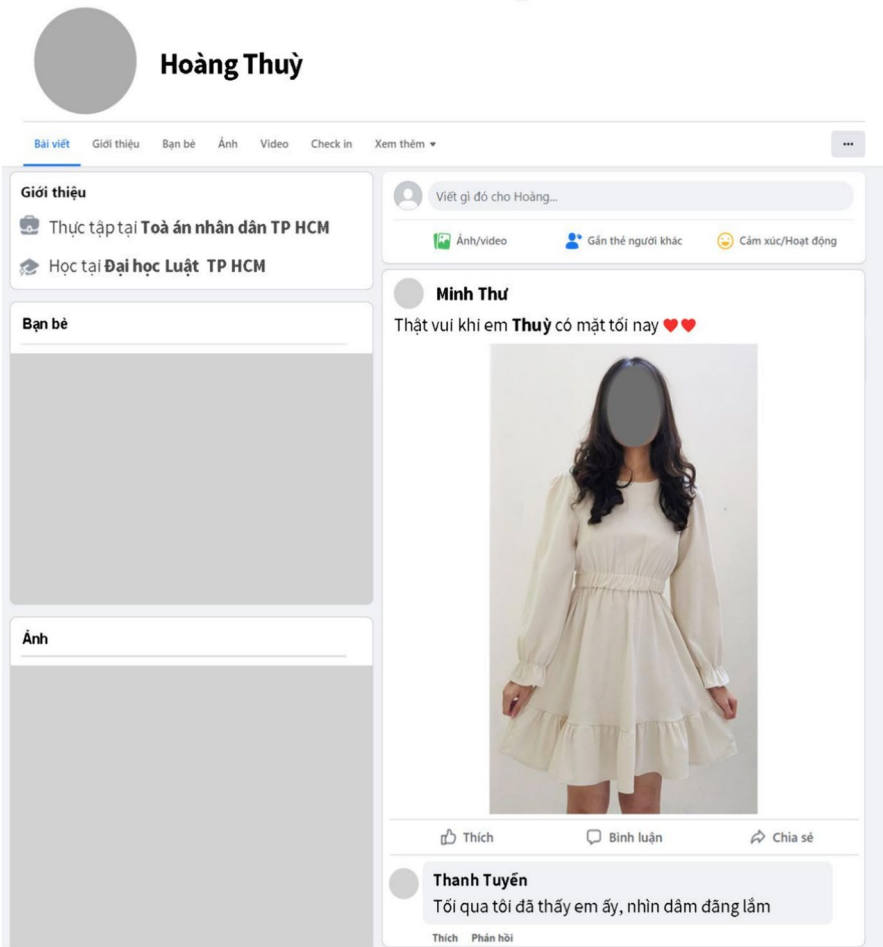


Fig. 1 Image from the conservative attire/high SES condition (Source: by authors)

provocative attire/low SES, (3) conservative attire/high SES, and (4) conservative attire/low SES.

Translation

Because the questions in the survey were taken from international sources, to help the participants understand the questions easily and accurately, we applied the translation method to translate our questionnaires from English to Vietnamese, as well as caption and comment on the Facebook post. In this method, we synthesized the questions and translated them into Vietnamese; then, we had an English teacher who graduated with a Bachelor of English Education translate them into English to examine whether that person accurately understood the questionnaires in Vietnamese. We

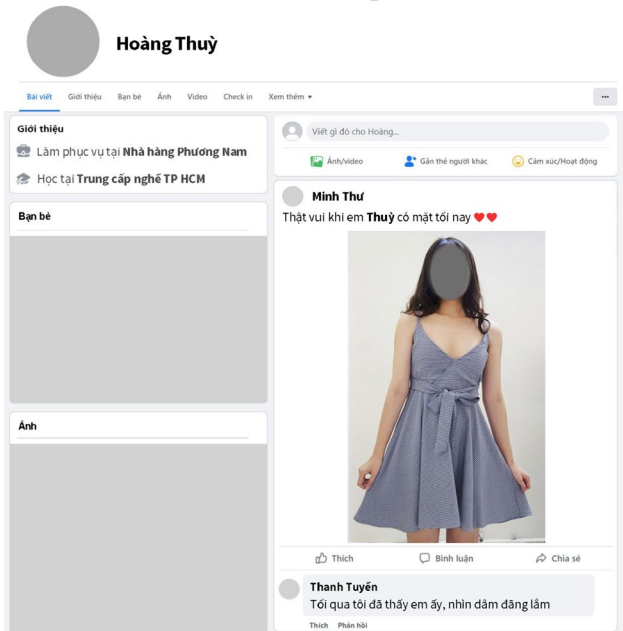


Fig. 2 Image from the provocative attire/low SES condition (Source: by authors)

repeated this process twice and got the Vietnamese questionnaires that most closely matched the original.

Perception of Slut-Shaming

To answer the research question that how Vietnamese students view “slut-shaming” behavior, “slut,” and “slut-shamers,” participants are requested to evaluate both the “slut” (Hoang Thuy) and the “shamer” (Thanh Tuyen) through the semantic-differential measure of person perception (Janda et al., 1981). We used subscales, which are couples of antonyms from this indicator, to calculate the participants’ entire evaluation (e.g., bad-good). Participants were required to rate these 12 items on a 7-point scale from 1 to 7, and the higher the scores were, the more positive the evaluations were. In this part, the “slut” evaluation’s Cronbach’s alpha was roughly 0.88, whereas the “shamer” evaluation was roughly 0.89.

Social Distance

To answer the research question (2) whether participants want social distance from the “shamer” or not?, the authors used a social distance measure from a research paper studied by Stein (1966). To assess university students’ readiness to participate in common social interactions with varying degrees of intimacy, we selected seven items (e.g., “Bạn có sẵn sàng trở thành hàng xóm với Hoàng

Thùy không?” (Are you willing to be neighbors with this person?) or “Bạn có sẵn sàng xem Hoàng Thùy như bạn thân không?” (Are you willing to become his/her close friend?). A scale that consisted of six points, from 1 (which conveys Definite No) to 6 (Definite Yes) was employed to assess participants’ willingness to take part in these activities, given that lower scores indicate higher desire for social distance and higher willingness to affiliate. Cronbach’s alpha for “slut” was around 0.87 in this section, while “shamer” was around 0.88.

Perception of Justification

From the original research materials (Leanna J. Papp et al., 2017a, 2017b), the researchers focused on whether the participants considered the “slut-shaming” comment justified or unjustified in the given context. Therefore, we included a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 6 (very) to rate the extent to which they thought justified “shamer’s” comment (“Thanh Tuyen”).

Evaluation of “Shamer’s” Tone

We asked the participants to indicate how they perceived the “shamer’s” tone during the interaction in order to gain insight into the motive of the person who “shamed” other women on Facebook. It is because it can be difficult to decipher tone from text-based discussion (Walther et al., 2008), and we hoped to gain insight into how this interaction may have been perceived differently based on the dressing and the SES of the “slut.” The participants were asked to rate the extent to which they believed the “shamer” was jealous, judgmental, and serious, and they responded on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much so).

Results

To analyze how the Facebook conversation was interpreted, we ran three 2×2 MANOVAs: a first one to evaluate perceptions of the “slut” (with both general evaluation and social distance), a second one to assess perceptions of the “shamer” (on both general evaluation and social distance), and a third one to analyze perceptions of the comment’s perceived tone (assessing whether the tone was perceived as jealous, judgmental, and serious). To find out whether the comment was conceived as more judgmental or more jealous, we repeatedly used measure ANOVA to examine which of these tone variables was more considerably affirmed. We used a 2×2 ANOVA to assess whether the participants thought the slut-shaming issue was justified. For each analysis, the two independent factors were “slut” attire and “slut” socioeconomic status.

Table 1 MANOVA results for perceptions of “slut” and “shamer”

	Perception of “slut”	Perception of “shamer”
“Slut” attire × “slut” SES	$F(6,410) = 1.455, p = 0.192, \eta^2_{\text{partial}} = 0.021$	$F(6,410) = 1.166, p = 0.324, \eta^2_{\text{partial}} = 0.17$

All η^2 reported are partial η^2

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics and univariate ANOVA results for perception of “Slut” and “Shamer” and the tone of “Shamer’s” comment

	Provocative x High M(SD)	Provocative x Low M(SD)	Conservative x High M(SD)	Conservative x High M(SD)	Univariate Equation
Slut attire x “Slut” SES on “Slut” general evaluation	4.428 (.82045)	4.5888 (0.71289)	4.4309 (0.8577)	4.344 (0.75323)	$F(3, 206) = .891, p = .446,$ $\eta^2 = .533$
Slut attire x “Slut” SES on “Slut” social distance	4.0943 (1.02147)	4.1698 (0.81492)	3.9127 (0.96748)	3.9191 (0.85048)	$F(3, 206) = 1.043, p = .375,$ $\eta^2 = .875$
Slut attire x “Slut” SES on “shamer” general evaluation	3.0417 (0.9037)	3.0739 (0.93294)	3.196 (0.9139)	2.794 (0.70722)	$F(3, 206) = 2.007, p = .114,$ $\eta^2 = 1.515$
Slut attire x “Slut” SES on “shamer” social distance	2.7429 (1.13224)	2.6361 (0.91883)	2.7989 (0.97939)	2.5202 (0.57081)	$F(3, 206) = .948, p = .418,$ $\eta^2 = .803$
Slut attire x “Slut” SES on perception of serious tone	3.3 (1.669)	3.6 (1.633)	2.69 (1.921)	3.72 (1.68)	$F(3, 206) = 3.825, p = .011,$ $\eta^2 = 11.466$
Slut attire x “Slut” SES on perception of jealous tone	4.06 (1.634)	4.58 (1.715)	3.8 (2.192)	4.08 (1.674)	$F(3, 206) = 1.745, p = .159,$ $\eta^2 = 5.794$
Slut attire x “Slut” SES on perception of judgmental tone	5.52 (1.752)	5.13 (1.606)	4.37 (2.309)	4.96 (1.901)	$F(3, 206) = 3.263, p = .022,$ $\eta^2 = 11.962$

All η^2 reported are partial η^2

Perception of “Slut”

The first MANOVA investigated the perceptions of the “slut” from participants; social distance and general evaluation were the dependent variables. There was no crucial interaction between “slut” attire and “slut” SES. The MANOVA results of perceptions of the “slut” were shown in Table 1.

The univariate ANOVAs for “slut” attire and SES showed social distance and general evaluation had no considerable difference (see Table 2 for univariate results, means, and standard deviations). In all conditions, the tests described that “slut” attire and “slut” SES had no considerable influence on preferred general evaluation and social distance. Either in attire condition, there was no significant difference in the desired social distance as well as general evaluation between high and low SES targets. The finding indicates that the participant was not affected by attire or SES while evaluating “slut” (Hoang Thuy).

Perception of “Shamer”

The second MANOVA was run to analyze how people perceived the “shamer” regarding social distance and general evaluation (see Table 1). There was considerable interaction between “slut” attire and “slut” SES (see Fig. 3).

Desired Social Distance from “Shamer”

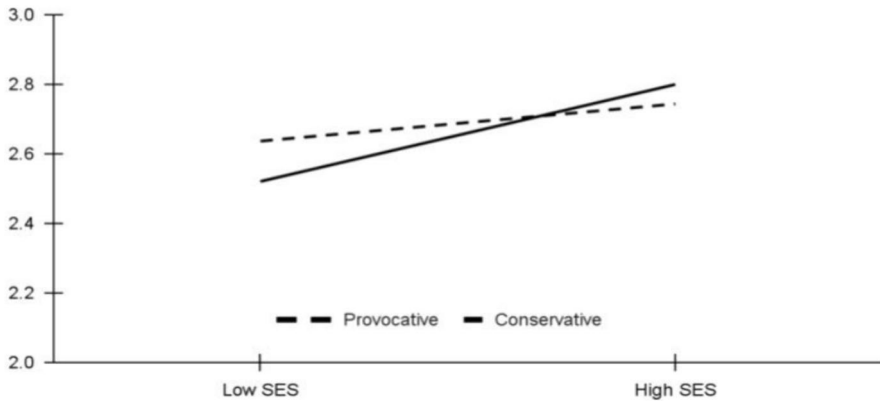


Fig. 3 Mean values of desired social distance from the “shamer”

When the univariate ANOVA was examined under the “slut” attire condition on the perception of the “shamer,” it was specified that social distance was only significantly affected (see Table 2 for univariate results, means, and standard deviations). As for the attire condition, participants’ perceptions of “shamer” were noticeably different based on SES. The following tests suggest that participants were willing to have closer engagement with the person who shamed the high SES and conservatively dressed target compared to the person shaming low SES with the same attire. The result showed that the participants found it easier to socialize with someone who “slut-shamed” the high SES and conservatively dressed target.

Assessment of “Shamer” Tone

A third MANOVA was performed to assess perceptions of the “shamer’s” comment’s tone. The two independent variables still were “slut” attire and “slut” SES. Perceptions of the tone as jealous, judgmental, and serious were the three dependent variables. However, there was a notable two-way interaction between “slut” attire and SES (see Figs. 4 and 5). The MANOVA results of perceptions of the “shamer’s” tone were displayed in Table 3.

The univariate examination revealed a significant interaction between judgmental and jealous tones, in contrast to serious tones (see Table 2 for univariate results, means, and standard deviations). The following test demonstrated the result that perceptions of serious tone did not change across all conditions. If the participant recognized the provocatively dressed and high SES target, their viewpoint of the comment was not very serious. On the other hand, participants believed the tone of the comment toward the conservatively dressed and high SES

Perception of the tone as Judgmental

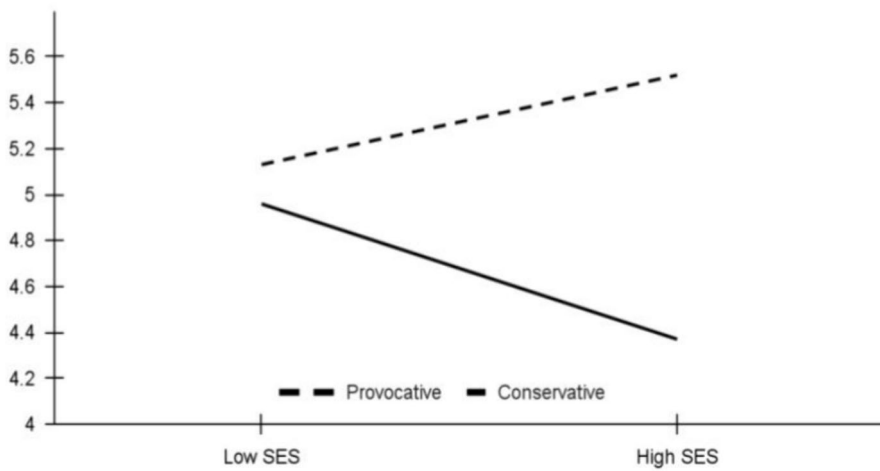


Fig. 4 Mean values of perceived judgmental of the tone of the “slut-shaming” interaction (Source: by authors)

Perception of the tone as Jealous

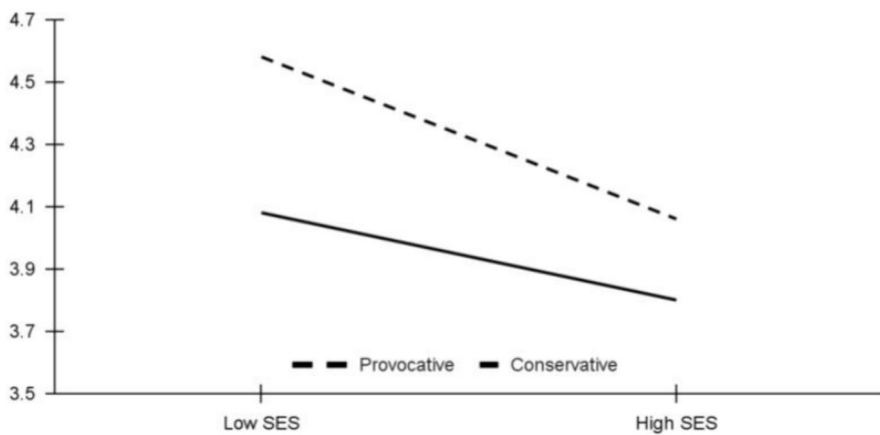


Fig. 5 Mean values of perceived jealousy of the tone of the “slut-shaming” interaction (Source: by authors)

Table 3 MANOVA results for perceptions of “shamer” tone and ANOVA results for the perceived justification of “shamer’s” comment

	The tone of “shamer’s” comment	Justification of “shamer’s” comment
“Slut” attire × “slut” SES	$F(9, 496.633) = 2.852, p = 0.003, \eta^2_{\text{partial}} = 0.040$	$F(6, 410) = 1.166, p = 0.324, \eta^2_{\text{partial}} = 0.17$

All η^2 reported are partial η^2

target was noticeably more serious than toward the low SES with similar attire, and the least serious is provocatively dressed and low SES.

There was a substantial difference in how the tone was perceived as jealousy. Participants' perception of the jealous comment was consistent across all conditions (see Table 2 for univariate results, means, and standard deviations). Moreover, there was a significant distinction in how people thought of tone as judgmental. In the SES condition, based on attire, participants' interpretation of judgmental tone indicated a significant difference. The "slut-shaming" comment was not considered more judgmental if the high SES target was dressed provocatively than if the target was dressed conservatively in the same SES.

To determine whether "slut-shaming" was assessed more by jealousy (evaluating sexual competition) or by judgment (evaluating concern with norm violation), we repeatedly performed ANOVA measures with jealous and judgmental tones as variables. Sum up, more people rated a higher degree for judgmental tone ($M=4.99$, $SD=1.945$) than for jealous tone ($M=4.13$, $SD=1.832$), $F(3, 206)=1.745$, $p=0.159$, $\eta^2=5.794$.

The final analysis determined if the "shamer's" comment was justified. We applied the same independent variables of "slut" attire and "slut" SES in a 2×2 ANOVA test (see Table 3). The following analysis showed that the comment was not justified in four conditions (see Fig. 6). The provocatively dressed and low SES target was interpreted as more justified ($M=2.45$, $SD=1.338$) than the conservatively dressed and high SES target ($M=2.13$, $SD=1.542$). To sum up, the incident's low acceptability was illustrated by the consistently low justification scores.

Perception of the comment as Justified

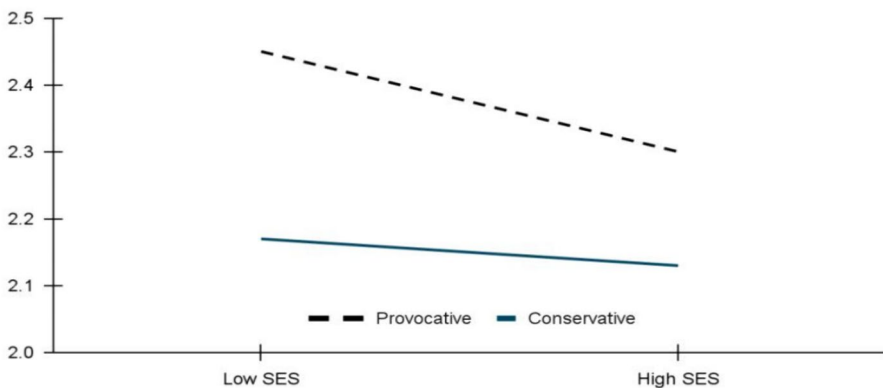


Fig. 6 Mean values of perception justified of the "slut-shaming" comment was justified (Source: by authors)

Discussion

This study aimed to expand on previous studies about social media perceptions of “sluts” and “slut-shamers” by manipulating the target’s socioeconomic level and clothing choices. The primary emphasis of this study was on the reactions of female participants when they witnessed one woman “slut-shaming” another.

We hypothesized that a “slut” with a low SES and provocative clothes would be evaluated harsher than her counterpart with a high SES and a conservative outfit. Surprisingly, the results showed that “sluts” are perceived favorably under all conditions. Regardless of attire or social economic standing, participants do not tend to conduct social distance from the “slut” (Hoang Thuy). The findings are different with the prior research (Naicker & Singh, 2021) (Bound Alberti, 2021). Papp et al., 2017a, 2017b suggested that a person’s perception of a “slut” may vary depending on her dress and socioeconomic standing. The outcome raises many questions and forces us to pay more attention to this topic. It may be because the SES of female students is undervalued in the Vietnamese traditional and social context (Duong et al., 2019). Moreover, as mentioned in the literature review, at the time the authors write this paper, there is no consensus social standard to evaluate Vietnamese youth’s dressing as provocative or conservative. Especially, in Ho Chi Minh City, one of the most dynamic cities in Vietnam, where this study is conducted, many students do not hesitate to experience sexy fashion such as underboob styles that reveal the lower parts of the breasts and upload on their social accounts, shaping new perception of sexy dressing (Nguyen, 2022). In the future, when researchers find an approximated standard for dressing in Vietnamese community, this factor will be retested and developed.

We hypothesized that if the “slut-shamer” shamed a high SES/conservatively dressed “slut,” our participants would evaluate her more negatively than if she shamed a low SES/provocatively dressed “slut.” According to our hypothesis and previous research, the “shamer” was generally seen unfavorably. And the act of shaming others is socially unacceptable. Women desired more social distance from the “shamer,” who shamed conservatively dressed women of lower socioeconomic status in comparison to those with higher socioeconomic status. In terms of dressing, it is likely because she was humiliating someone who was not publicly breaking feminine societal standards (Mahalik et al., 2005).

The perceived tone of the “shamer’s” comment was important in this study as it can be difficult to judge the tone of a comment online (Walther et al., 2008). Participants perceived no seriousness in the comment in all four conditions. On the other hand, the tone that targets people who dress provocatively with high SES is viewed as the least serious. For the remaining cases, the perception of participants toward the seriousness of the tone of a conservatively dressed “slut” with high SES is the highest, followed by conservative/low SES, and provocative/low SES. The “shamer’s” tone is interpreted as jealousy in all conditions, which may indicate competitive behavior in Darwin’s theory of sexual selection (Baumeister & Twenge, 2002; Frost, 2022). However, when compared to the judgmental tone, the latter is more prominent, indicating that social norm

breaches are more serious than sexual jealousy. Participants found the tone to be more judgmental when aimed at conservatives, a high SES target, and least judgmental toward provocative/high SES target.

When evaluating the findings of this study, certain limitations should be acknowledged. It is important to understand this study within the context in which it was conducted. Our participants were required to be undergraduates in university at the time of the survey; therefore, we may not have fully tapped into the “slut-shaming” culture since casual sex is not unusual in Vietnamese universities (Bergenfeld et al., 2022). Furthermore, due to a lack of resources, the survey is conducted using self-administered questionnaires, which makes bias inevitable. Instead of real-life contacts, we utilized a fictional Facebook account. Using confederates to make the issue more personal may result in greater sentiments, favorable or negative, about “slut-shaming.” The linked image of a woman exposing her clothing in the questionnaire may not be revealing enough to evoke the desired thoughts we want to measure. Moreover, this study was conducted in a large city in Vietnam, which is unrepresentative of the whole country. It is likely that adolescents in other geographic areas, for example, rural areas, may have different levels of using the social media, and different levels of dressing and SES, and thus, the perception of slut shaming may be different. Therefore, more studies are needed in other provinces and regions in Vietnam.

After doing this research, we found that slut-shaming is still a relatively new definition here in Vietnam, so there is a very limited amount of research on this phenomenon (Duong et al., 2019; Ho et al., 2020). Therefore, we believe that this is the first step to developing a more complete understanding of the slut-shaming phenomenon here in Vietnam. This study is being conducted to investigate the significant psychological impacts of slut-shaming by restricting the sample size to only female students at a private University. This research will provide a different angle on slut-shaming in social media and we hope that resources may help construct curriculum policy, particularly teaching materials, or technology to deal with the slut-shaming phenomenon overall. What matters is that despite not being fully understood, slut shaming already imposes harm on adolescent health and well-being in many ways, particularly mental health as found in previous studies. Numerous studies have confirmed that experiences of physical or sexual abuse can lead to psychological fragility in survivors, especially when it comes to social adaptation, emotional regulation, or problem solving (Fergusson et al., 1997; Lavi et al., 2019). Because of this susceptibility, survivors are more likely to be victims of other kinds of abuse, whether or not they are sexual in nature. It is also shown that slut shaming has an adverse effect on young girls’ physical and mental health as early as puberty (Hackman et al., 2017). Teenagers’ experiences in life mold their worldviews, skills, and vulnerabilities; this is particularly true when it comes to any violence they may have witnessed as young children. Slut shaming behaviors are being transferred into more sophisticated forms with relation to the development of technology such as the Internet and mobile phone social networks. Therefore, a detailed description of slut shaming forms may provide a scientific reference for planning appropriate and effective intervention strategies.

Gender disparities were again underlined by this study and numerous other studies, which suggested that female teenagers and young women were more likely to be exposed to slut-shaming and to experience more severe negative outcomes as a result (Miano & Urone, 2024).

When it comes to preventing this type of gender-based violence that targets the most vulnerable youth, some doable recommendations can be made. When young people face challenges, their families and parents or other carers can help. Our findings urge that young people be included in a conversation with their families about gender stereotypes, sexist violence, and stereotypical standards of gender. To gradually dismantle gender stereotypes, we advise expanding preventive actions outside of the home and organizing the dissemination and upholding of prosocial ideals. Some of the most important recommendations that have been made in order to prevent and minimize slut-shaming include creating social interventions, encouraging gender awareness as a protective factor, and making informed judgements within a professional setting. Moreover, when it comes to tackling female students' subordination in online activities, schools have a crucial role to play./.

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Data Availability The data supporting this study's findings are available from the corresponding author, Le Thi My Danh, upon reasonable request.

Declarations

Ethical Committee Ethics review is not required.

Conflict of Interest The authors declare no competing interests.

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