

Gender-Based Street and Public Spaces Experience and Women's Psychosocial Well-Being

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ABSTRACT

Gender-based street harassment remains a pervasive issue that threatens women's safety, dignity, and psychosocial well-being, particularly in public spaces where gendered power relations are often normalized. This study examined the relationship between gender-based street and public space experiences and women's psychosocial well-being among female criminology students at Yllana Bay View College, Pagadian City, Philippines. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational design, data were collected from 215 third-year female criminology students through a structured questionnaire measuring experiences of catcalling, wolf-whistling, and unwanted invitations, as well as emotional, social, and psychological well-being. Statistical analyses included frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and Kendall's tau-B correlation coefficient. Findings revealed that gender-based street harassment was experienced at a moderate level, with unwanted invitations having the highest prevalence (WM = 3.2), followed by catcalling (WM = 3.1) and wolf-whistling (WM = 3.0). Meanwhile, respondents reported high levels of psychosocial well-being overall (WM = 3.6), although exposure to harassment remained a concern. Correlation analysis showed a statistically significant but weak positive relationship between gender-based street harassment and psychosocial well-being ($\tau = 0.166$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that increased exposure to harassment was significantly associated with psychosocial outcomes. The findings highlight the persistent presence of gender-based harassment and its measurable psychosocial implications. The study underscores the need for strengthened institutional interventions, gender-sensitive policies, and educational programs to promote safer public spaces and protect women's psychosocial well-being.

Keywords: Gender-based street harassment; psychosocial well-being; Safe Spaces Act; public space safety; female criminology students; gender-based violence

INTRODUCTION

Gender-based street harassment remains a widespread global concern that threatens women's safety, autonomy, and psychosocial well-being in public spaces. Women frequently encounter behaviors such as catcalling, wolfwhistling, and unwanted sexual advances, which contribute to fear, anxiety, and reduced freedom of movement. These experiences have been identified as significant forms of gender-based violence that negatively affect women's emotional stability, mental health, and overall quality of life (UN Women, 2023; Lakew et al., 2025; Narula et al., 2025). Exposure to repeated harassment has also been associated with psychological distress, reduced self-confidence, and increased social withdrawal, demonstrating its long-term psychosocial consequences (Narula et al., 2025). As a result, gender-based street harassment is increasingly recognized not only as a social issue but also as a public health and human rights concern that requires empirical investigation and institutional intervention (UN Women, 2024).

In the Philippine context, gender-based sexual harassment in public spaces has been formally addressed through Republic Act No. 11313, also known as the Safe Spaces Act, which criminalizes various forms of gender-based harassment occurring in streets, transportation systems, workplaces, and educational institutions (Republic of the Philippines, 2019; Philippine Commission on Women, 2021). Despite the implementation of this law, studies indicate that many women continue to experience harassment in public environments, highlighting gaps between

policy implementation and actual protection (UniversePG, 2025). Furthermore, research has shown that gender-based harassment persists in academic environments and urban areas, where women report psychological distress, reduced mobility, and heightened fear despite increased awareness of legal protections (Aquit et al., 2024). These findings suggest that legal frameworks alone are insufficient to eliminate harassment, emphasizing the need for continued research on its psychosocial impact within specific educational and social contexts.

Although existing international and national studies have documented the prevalence and psychosocial effects of gender-based harassment, there remains a significant research gap in localized, institution-based studies, particularly among female criminology students in regional academic institutions such as those in Mindanao. Most studies focus on general populations, workplace environments, or urban centers, with limited empirical research examining how gender-based street harassment affects the psychosocial well-being of criminology students who are future law enforcement professionals (Lakew et al., 2025; Aquit et al., 2024). Moreover, few quantitative studies have statistically examined the relationship between gender-based street harassment experiences and psychosocial well-being among female students in Philippine higher education institutions. Addressing this gap is essential to provide evidence-based insights that can support gender-responsive institutional policies, strengthen preventive interventions, and promote safer academic and public environments. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between gender-based street and public space experiences and women's psychosocial well-being among female criminology students, contributing to the advancement of gender-based violence prevention and psychosocial protection research.

Objectives

- Describe the socio-demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, and civil status.
- Determine the level of gender-based street and public space experiences among the respondents in terms of catcalling, wolf-whistling, and unwanted invitations.
- Assess the level of psychosocial well-being of the respondents in terms of emotional well-being, social well-being, and psychological well-being.
- Determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between gender-based street and public space experiences and women's psychosocial well-being.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research approach utilizing descriptive and correlational research designs to examine the relationship between gender-based street and public space experiences and women's psychosocial well-being. The descriptive design was used to determine the level and prevalence of gender-based street harassment experiences and psychosocial well-being among the respondents, while the correlational design was applied to assess the statistical relationship between these variables without manipulating them. The study was conducted at Yllana Bay View College Annex 1, located in Barangay Balangasan, Pagadian City, Zamboanga del Sur, Philippines. The respondents consisted of 215 third-year female criminology students enrolled during the academic year 2025–2026. Cluster sampling was utilized to ensure that respondents were selected from defined academic groupings, providing a representative sample of the target population.

The primary data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire checklist developed based on an extensive review of related literature and aligned with the objectives of the study. The questionnaire consisted of four parts: the first part gathered the socio-demographic profile of the respondents, including age, gender, and civil status; the second part assessed gender-based street and public space experiences in terms of catcalling, wolf-whistling, and unwanted invitations; and the third part measured psychosocial well-being in terms of emotional, social, and psychological dimensions. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). Before data collection, the instrument was reviewed and validated to ensure clarity, relevance, and reliability. Ethical considerations were strictly observed by obtaining informed consent from all respondents, ensuring voluntary participation, maintaining confidentiality, and protecting the anonymity of the participants.

The collected data were organized, tabulated, and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. Frequency counts and percentages were used to describe the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Weighted mean was utilized to determine the level of gender-based street harassment experiences and psychosocial well-being. To examine the relationship between gender-based street and public space experiences and psychosocial well-being, Kendall’s tau-B correlation coefficient was employed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). This statistical method was appropriate for measuring the strength and direction of the association between ordinal variables. The results of the analysis provided empirical evidence regarding the relationship between gender-based street harassment experiences and women’s psychosocial well-being.

To ensure the reliability and internal consistency of the research instrument, a pilot test was conducted among a sample of students with similar characteristics to the target respondents. Reliability analysis was performed using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient, which is widely used to assess the internal consistency of Likertscale instruments. The overall Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of the instrument was found to be within the acceptable reliability threshold of 0.70 or higher, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Content validity was established through expert review by specialists in criminology, psychology, and research methodology, who evaluated the instrument for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. Necessary revisions were made based on expert recommendations prior to full-scale data collection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The presentation of results was organized into phases. The first phase presents the socio-demographic profile of the respondents, including age, gender, and civil status. The second and third phases present the data collected from the respondents regarding their experiences and psychosocial well-being. The fourth phase discusses the significant relationship among the study variables.

Part 1 Socio – demographic Profile of the Respondents

This section discusses the socio demographic characteristic of the respondent.

Table 1 Socio – demographic profile in term of age and sex N=215

Variables	Frequency	% Share
Age range		
15-20	30	14
21-25	185	86
Sex distribution		
Female	215	100
Civil Status		
Single	215	100

The demographic profile showing that all respondents were female, mostly aged 21–25 years and single, reflects a population that belongs to a socially and academically active age group with increased exposure to public environments. University-aged women are recognized as one of the most vulnerable populations to gender-based harassment due to their frequent engagement in public activities such as commuting and academic participation (Fisher et al., 2020). Similarly, a global survey found that women aged 18–24 reported the highest prevalence of street harassment compared to other age groups, emphasizing their increased vulnerability in public settings (UN Women, 2021).

In the Philippine context, a study conducted among college students confirmed that female university students are more likely to experience gender-based harassment due to social exposure, gender norms, and public mobility patterns (Aguirre et al., 2023). These findings support the present study’s focus on female criminology students and highlight the importance of examining harassment experiences within this demographic group.

Part 2: Gender based street and public spaces experience

This section presents the findings on how gender based street and public spaces experience – catcalling, unwanted invitation, and wolf whistling relate to women psychosocial well-being.

Table 2 Catcalling		
Statements	Mean	AE
1 I have experienced cat calling in public space.	3.5	A
2. Catcalling occurs frequently in my daily life.	2.9	M
3. I have been catcalled while walking alone.	3.3	M
4. I have been catcalled while using public transportation.	2.9	M
5. I have catcalled in my workplace or school environment.	2.8	M
6. I have been catcalled by strangers.	3.3	M
7. I have been catcalled by people I know.	3.2	M
8. Catcalling happens more often in certain neighborhoods	3.1	M
9. I feel safer in certain areas because catcalling is less frequent there.	3.2	M
10.The frequency of catcalling I experience varies depending on the day of the week.	2.8	M
Weighted mean	3.1	M
4.21-5 very high (VH), 3.41-4.3 high (H), 2.61-3.4 moderate (M), 1.81 – 2.6 low (L), 1-1.8 very low (, M- Mean AE- Adjectival Equivalent.		

The moderate level of catcalling experienced by respondents indicates that verbal gender-based harassment remains a persistent issue affecting female students in public spaces. Catcalling is widely recognized as one of the most common forms of sexual harassment, contributing to emotional distress and reduced feelings of safety among women (DelGreco & Christensen, 2020). Research has shown that frequent exposure to catcalling is associated with increased anxiety, psychological stress, and behavioral avoidance of public spaces (Farhane et al., 2024). Furthermore, a study conducted among university students found that verbal harassment significantly affected women’s emotional well-being and perception of personal safety, reinforcing gender inequality in public environments (Fileborn et al., 2021). These findings support the present study’s results, confirming that catcalling continues to affect women’s psychosocial well-being.

Table 3 Unwanted Invitation		
Statements	Mean	AE
1.I have experienced wolf whistling in public spaces	3.4	M
2. Wolf whistling occur frequently in my daily life.	3.0	M
3. I have been wolf whistled while walking alone.	3.4	M
4. I have been wolf whistled while using public transportation.	3.0	M
5. I have been wolf whistled in my work place or school environment.	2.9	M
6. I have been wolf whistled by stranger.	3.4	M
7. I have been wolf whistled by people I know.	3.3	M
8. Wolf whistling happen more often in certain neighborhood than others.	3.2	M
9. I don’t feel safer in certain areas because wolf whistling is frequent there.	3.3	M
10. I am more frequently wolf whistled when I am dressed in a certain way.	3.1	M

Weighted mean	3.2	M
4.21-5 very high (VH), 3.41-4.3 high (H), 2.61-3.4 moderate (M), 1.81 – 2.6 low (L), 1-1.8 very low (, M- Mean AE- Adjectival Equivalent.		

Table 3 shows that wolf-whistling was experienced at a moderate level (WM = 3.2), indicating that respondents were regularly exposed to non-verbal gender-based harassment in public spaces. The highest mean scores were associated with experiences occurring while walking alone or being targeted by strangers, suggesting increased vulnerability in unprotected environments. Wolf-whistling is widely recognized as a form of genderbased sexual harassment that undermines women’s psychological safety and sense of autonomy (UN Women, 2023). Exposure to such harassment has been linked to increased hypervigilance, emotional distress, and reduced feelings of security in public environments (Lakew et al., 2025). Similarly, studies have demonstrated that persistent non-verbal harassment contributes to reduced confidence, increased anxiety, and avoidance behaviors among women (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2021). These findings suggest that wolfwhistling contributes to gender-based psychological harm and reinforces gender inequality in public spaces.

The moderate level of wolf-whistling reported by respondents highlights the continued presence of nonverbal gender-based harassment in public spaces. Wolf-whistling, although sometimes normalized, contributes to psychological discomfort and reduced feelings of safety among women (Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020). Research has shown that exposure to non-verbal harassment increases women’s perception of vulnerability and contributes to emotional distress and anxiety (Fairchild & Rudman, 2021). Additionally, a global study confirmed that women exposed to gender-based harassment often experience reduced psychological safety and increased fear when navigating public environments (Plan International, 2021). These findings reinforce the present study’s results, demonstrating that wolf-whistling contributes to psychosocial harm among female students.

Table 4 *Wolf whistling*

Statements	Mean	AE
1. I have received unwanted invitation from stranger.	2.8	M
2. I have received unwanted invitation from acquaintances.	3.0	M
3. I have received unwanted invitation from people I know.	3.3	M
4. I have received unwanted invitation online (e.g., social media, dating apps).	3.1	M
5. I have received unwanted invitation in person.	3.0	M
6. I have received unwanted invitation at work or school.	2.9	M
7. I have received unwanted invitation in public spaces.	2.8	M
8. I receive unwanted invitation more frequently in certain locations.	2.9	M
9. The unwanted invitation I’ve received were primarily in nature.	2.0	L
10. the unwanted invitation I’ve received were primarily sexual in nature.	2.7	M
Weighted mean	3.0	M
4.21-5 very high (VH), 3.41-4.3 high (H), 2.61-3.4 moderate (M), 1.81 – 2.6 low (L), 1-1.8 very low (, M- Mean AE- Adjectival Equivalent.		

Table 4 indicates that unwanted invitations were experienced at a moderate level (WM = 3.0), with the highest mean score associated with invitations from individuals known to the respondents. This finding suggests that gender-based harassment may occur not only from strangers but also from acquaintances, reflecting broader social and relational risks. Unwanted sexual invitations represent a form of gender-based harassment that violates personal boundaries and contributes to emotional discomfort and perceived vulnerability (UN Women, 2023). Research has shown that repeated exposure to unwanted sexual advances increases stress, anxiety, and reduced psychosocial well-being among women (Narula et al., 2025). Furthermore, studies indicate that women exposed to such harassment often experience decreased feelings of safety, reduced social trust, and behavioral

modifications aimed at avoiding harassment (Lakew et al., 2025). These findings reinforce the psychological and social consequences of unwanted invitations in public and social environments.

The moderate level of unwanted invitations experienced by respondents indicates that sexual harassment can occur in both public and social contexts, including interactions with acquaintances. Unwanted sexual advances have been identified as significant predictors of psychological distress and reduced emotional wellbeing among women (Street et al., 2022). Similarly, research has shown that exposure to unwanted sexual attention contributes to anxiety, reduced confidence, and negative psychosocial outcomes (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020). Furthermore, a study conducted among university students confirmed that unwanted sexual invitations negatively affect mental health, emotional stability, and perceived safety (Sundaram et al., 2023). These findings support the present study’s results, emphasizing the psychological impact of unwanted sexual advances.

Part 3. Women Psychosocial well being

This section presents the survey result on the survey assessment of women psychosocial well-being.

Table 5 Emotional well being		
Statements	Mean	AE
1. I feel a sense of inner peace most days.	3.6	H
2. I have positive outlook on life.	3.6	H
3. I feel a sense of hope for the future.	3.8	H
4. I feel satisfied with my life.	3.6	H
5. I experience feeling of gratitude regularly.	3.5	H
6. I am able to forgive myself and others.	3.6	H
7. I feel comfortable expressing vulnerability.	3.3	M
8. I am able to identify and manage my triggers.	3.4	M
9. I feel touch with my emotion.	3.5	H
10. I am generally free from excessive worry or anxiety.	3.2	M
Weighted mean	3.5	H
4. .21-5 very high (VH), 3.41-4.3 high (H), 2.61-3.4 moderate (M), 1.81 – 2.6 low (L), 1-1.8 very low (, M- Mean AE- Adjectival Equivalent		

Table 5 shows that respondents reported a high level of emotional well-being (WM = 3.5), indicating that despite exposure to gender-based harassment, respondents maintained relatively positive emotional functioning. However, lower scores related to anxiety and emotional vulnerability suggest that harassment experiences may still influence emotional stability. Research has shown that women exposed to gender-based harassment often experience increased anxiety, fear, and emotional distress, even when maintaining overall psychological resilience (Narula et al., 2025). Similarly, studies have found that exposure to public harassment contributes to emotional stress, reduced psychological comfort, and long-term emotional vulnerability (Lakew et al., 2025). Furthermore, global evidence indicates that repeated harassment undermines emotional well-being and contributes to mental health challenges among women (UN Women, 2023). These findings suggest that while respondents demonstrate emotional resilience, gender-based harassment continues to pose emotional risks.

The high level of emotional well-being among respondents suggests the presence of emotional resilience despite exposure to gender-based harassment. Emotional resilience allows individuals to maintain psychological stability despite experiencing stressors (Lazarus et al., 2021). However, studies have shown that exposure to gender-based harassment contributes to increased emotional stress, anxiety, and reduced emotional well-being (DelGreco & Christensen, 2020). Similarly, research has demonstrated that harassment negatively affects emotional functioning and contributes to long-term psychological stress among women (Farhane et al., 2024). These findings suggest that while respondents demonstrate emotional resilience, harassment continues to pose emotional risks.

Table 6 Social Well being		
Statements	Mean	AE
1. I have meaningful connection with others.	3.6	H
2. I feel a sense of camaraderie with others.	3.6	H
3. I am able to communicate effectively with others.	3.6	H
4. I feel comfortable asking help from others.	3.8	H
5. I feel respected by the people in my life.	3.8	H
6. I have strong sense of community involvement.	3.5	H
7. I feel sense of belonging in my social groups.	3.5	H
8. I feel understood and accepted by my close relationship.	3.6	H
9. I feel comfortable being myself around others.	3.6	H
10. I have healthy boundaries in my relationships.	3.6	H
Weighted	3.6	H
4.21-5 very high (VH), 3.41-4.3 high (H), 2.61-3.4 moderate (M), 1.81 – 2.6 low (L), 1-1.8 very low (, M-Mean AE- Adjectival Equivalent.		

Table 6 indicates that respondents maintained a high level of social well-being (WM = 3.6), suggesting strong social relationships, support systems, and interpersonal functioning. However, gender-based harassment may still influence social behavior, including avoidance of public interaction. Research has shown that harassment negatively affects women’s sense of social belonging and reduces their willingness to engage in public environments (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2021). Exposure to harassment has also been associated with reduced trust, social withdrawal, and decreased participation in public life (Lakew et al., 2025). Furthermore, global studies emphasize that gender-based harassment limits women’s social freedom and participation, reinforcing gender inequality in public spaces (UN Women, 2023). These findings indicate that while respondents maintain strong social functioning, harassment may still influence social behavior and perceived safety.

The high level of social well-being among respondents indicates strong interpersonal relationships and social support systems. Social support has been identified as a protective factor that reduces the psychological impact of harassment (Cohen & Wills, 2021). Research has shown that women exposed to harassment often rely on social support to cope with emotional distress and psychological stress (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020). Additionally, studies confirm that social support improves resilience and psychological recovery among harassment victims (Street et al., 2022). These findings suggest that strong social support contributes to maintaining social well-being despite harassment experiences.

Table 7 Psychological well-being.		
Statements	Mean	AE
1. I feel sense of purpose and direction in my life.	3.8	H
2. I am proactive in pursuing my goals.	3.8	H
3. I feel confident in my ability to achieve my goals.	3.8	H
4. I am able to adapt to changing circumstances.	3.6	H
5. I am able to learn from my mistakes.	4.0	H
6. I am able to manage my time effectively and efficiently.	3.6	H
7. I feel in control of my own life.	3.6	H
8. I am able to make sound judgement and decisions.	3.6	H
9. I feel self-sufficient and independent.	3.5	H
10. I am generally optimistic and hopeful.	3.7	H

Weighted	3.7	H
4.21-5 very high (VH), 3.41-4.3 high (H), 2.61-3.4 moderate (M), 1.81 – 2.6 low (L), 1-1.8 very low (, M-Mean AE- Adjectival Equivalent.		

Table 7 reveals that respondents demonstrated a high level of psychological well-being (WM = 3.7), indicating strong self-confidence, personal growth, and psychological resilience. Despite exposure to harassment, respondents maintained positive psychological functioning, although harassment may still pose risks to mental health. Research has shown that exposure to gender-based harassment contributes to psychological distress, reduced life satisfaction, and emotional vulnerability (Narula et al., 2025). Similarly, studies indicate that women exposed to harassment may experience reduced psychological security and increased stress levels (Lakew et al., 2025). Furthermore, global evidence confirms that harassment undermines women’s psychological safety and overall well-being (UN Women, 2023). These findings suggest that while respondents maintain psychological resilience, harassment remains a significant psychosocial concern.

The high level of psychological well-being among respondents reflects strong self-confidence and psychological resilience. Psychological resilience plays a critical role in protecting individuals from mental health problems despite exposure to stressors (American Psychological Association, 2020). Research has shown that gender-based harassment negatively affects psychological well-being, contributing to stress, anxiety, and reduced life satisfaction (Sundaram et al., 2023). Similarly, studies confirm that exposure to harassment affects psychological functioning and emotional stability (Farhane et al., 2024). These findings indicate that harassment remains a psychosocial risk factor despite strong psychological resilience.

Part 4. Gender-based Street and Public Spaces Experience and Women Psychosocial Well-being.

This section presents the result of the analysis of the relationship between independent and dependent variable. The independent variable, gender based street and public spaces experience, included catcalling, unwanted invitation, wolf whistling.

Table 8 Gender based street and public spaces experience and women psychosocial well-being.

Variables		Psychosocial wellbeing
Cat calling	Correlation coefficient	0.099
	P value	0.037
Wolf whistling	Correlation coefficient	0.200
	P value	0.000
Unwanted Invitation	Correlation coefficient	0.169
	P value	0.000

A Kendal Tau B correlation coefficient was performed to assess the relationship between gender-based Table 8 shows statistically significant relationships between gender-based street harassment experiences and psychosocial well-being, with wolf-whistling showing the strongest correlation ($\tau = 0.200, p = 0.000$). These findings indicate that harassment experiences are significantly associated with psychosocial outcomes. Research has demonstrated that exposure to gender-based harassment significantly affects psychological health, emotional stability, and social functioning (Narula et al., 2025). Similarly, empirical studies have found statistically significant associations between harassment experiences and anxiety, stress, and reduced well-being (Lakew et al., 2025). Furthermore, global reports confirm that gender-based harassment contributes to adverse psychosocial consequences, including emotional distress and reduced psychological safety (UN Women, 2023). These findings support the statistical relationship identified in the present study.

The statistically significant correlations between harassment indicators and psychosocial well-being confirm that harassment experiences influence mental health outcomes. Research has shown that gender-based harassment significantly affects emotional stability and psychological well-being (DeIGreco & Christensen, 2020). Similarly, studies confirm that exposure to harassment contributes to increased psychological distress and

reduced well-being (Fileborn et al., 2021). Furthermore, global research demonstrates that harassment significantly affects psychosocial functioning and mental health (Plan International, 2021). These findings support the present study’s correlation results.

The weak but significant correlations observed between harassment indicators and psychosocial wellbeing suggest that harassment exposure interacts with multiple psychological and social factors. Rather than functioning as a direct determinant of psychosocial harm, harassment may influence well-being indirectly through mediating mechanisms such as coping strategies, emotional regulation, and social support systems. This finding highlights the importance of examining psychosocial well-being as a multidimensional construct influenced by both risk and protective factors. The results emphasize that while harassment remains a psychosocial stressor, its impact may be moderated by individual resilience and environmental support.

Table 9 Summary on Gender based street and Public Spaces: Experience and women psychosocial well-being.

Variables		Psychosocial well-being
Gender based street and public spaces experience	Correlation Coefficient	0.166
	P value	0.000

Table 9 shows a statistically significant positive relationship between gender-based street harassment and psychosocial well-being ($\tau = 0.166$, $p = 0.000$), confirming that harassment experiences influence psychosocial outcomes. This finding aligns with global evidence demonstrating that gender-based harassment negatively affects women’s psychological, emotional, and social well-being (UN Women, 2023). Research has shown that repeated exposure to harassment contributes to psychological distress, reduced emotional stability, and decreased well-being (Narula et al., 2025). Similarly, studies confirm that gender-based harassment significantly affects women’s mental health and psychosocial functioning (Lakew et al., 2025). These findings reinforce the importance of addressing gender-based harassment to protect women’s psychosocial well-being.

The significant overall relationship between gender-based harassment and psychosocial well-being confirms that harassment affects psychological functioning. Research has shown that exposure to harassment significantly contributes to psychological distress and reduced well-being (Street et al., 2022). Similarly, studies confirm that gender-based harassment affects emotional and psychological health (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020). Additionally, global studies emphasize that harassment negatively affects mental health and quality of life among women (UN Women, 2021). These findings support the present study’s overall results.

Although the correlation between gender-based street harassment and psychosocial well-being was statistically significant, the positive direction of the relationship requires careful interpretation. A positive correlation does not necessarily indicate that harassment improves psychosocial well-being; rather, it may reflect the presence of resilience, adaptive coping mechanisms, and strong social support among respondents. Female criminology students may develop psychological strength, emotional coping strategies, and heightened situational awareness as protective responses to harassment experiences. Additionally, the measurement scale used in this study assessed psychosocial well-being in terms of resilience, emotional strength, and social functioning, which may remain high despite exposure to harassment. This suggests that respondents are not unaffected by harassment but may possess protective psychological and social resources that buffer its negative effects. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as indicating a significant association between harassment exposure and psychosocial functioning, rather than a beneficial effect of harassment.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between gender-based street and public space experiences and women’s psychosocial well-being among female criminology students. The findings revealed that respondents moderately experienced gender-based harassment in the form of catcalling, wolf-whistling, and unwanted invitations, indicating that such behaviors remain prevalent in public and social environments. Despite these experiences, respondents demonstrated high levels of emotional, social, and psychological well-being, suggesting the

presence of resilience and coping mechanisms. However, statistical analysis confirmed a significant positive relationship between gender-based street harassment and psychosocial well-being, indicating that exposure to harassment is associated with measurable psychosocial effects. These findings confirm that gender-based harassment remains a persistent social issue that affects women's psychological safety and overall well-being, highlighting the need for continued attention to gender-sensitive protection and preventive strategies within academic and public settings.

Hence, it is recommended that higher education institutions strengthen gender-sensitive policies and implement comprehensive awareness programs to prevent gender-based harassment and promote safe public and academic environments. Educational institutions, particularly criminology programs, should integrate gender sensitivity training, Safe Spaces Act education, and psychosocial support services to empower female students and enhance their psychological resilience. Additionally, campus administrators and local government units should collaborate to establish reporting mechanisms, safety monitoring systems, and preventive interventions to reduce harassment in public spaces. Future research is also recommended to explore gender-based harassment across different academic programs and geographic locations using longitudinal and mixed-method approaches to better understand its long-term psychosocial impact and support the development of effective intervention strategies.

Despite its contributions, the study has several methodological and analytical limitations. The weak positive correlation observed requires careful interpretation, as it likely reflects resilience, coping mechanisms, and social support rather than a direct beneficial effect of harassment exposure. Additionally, the use of a cross-sectional correlational design limits causal interpretation. While the instrument demonstrated acceptable validity and reliability, future studies should provide more detailed psychometric reporting. Further research using longitudinal and mixed-method designs is recommended to better understand causal pathways and identify protective factors that buffer the psychosocial effects of harassment.

Ethical Consideration

This study strictly adhered to established institutional and ethical research standards to ensure the protection, dignity, and rights of all participants. Before data collection, ethical clearance was obtained from the authorized Institutional Research Ethics Committee to confirm that the study complied with ethical principles governing research involving human participants. The respondents were fully informed about the purpose, procedures, and objectives of the study, as well as the voluntary nature of their participation. Written informed consent was obtained from each participant before the administration of the questionnaire. Participants were assured that their responses would be treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic and research purposes. To protect their privacy, anonymity was maintained by ensuring that no personally identifiable information was collected or disclosed. Furthermore, respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or consequence. All collected data were securely stored and handled in accordance with ethical data protection standards to ensure integrity, confidentiality, and responsible use of research information from the participants. Anonymity and confidentiality were upheld during the entire investigation.

Conflict Of Interest

The authors declare that there are no financial, personal, institutional, or professional conflicts of interest that could have influenced the design, conduct, analysis, or reporting of this study. The research was conducted independently, and the findings presented reflect the authors' objective analysis and interpretation of the data without any external influence or bias.

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