

Solutions to Overcome Students' Psychological Difficulties in the Current Context

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Abstract:

Students' psychological difficulties are understood as problems arising during their daily life and academic activities. These issues negatively affect and hinder various aspects of students' lives, particularly learning, communication, social participation, and personal routines. These are complex and conflicting problems that require students to make efforts to overcome in order to adapt to student life. This paper analyzes the current state of psychological difficulties among students and proposes several solutions to help overcome such challenges in universities today.

Keywords: Current situation, psychological difficulties, solutions, students, university.

1. Introduction:

In a society that is becoming increasingly complex, with growing life pressures, students' psychological well-being has emerged as an urgent issue that demands attention. In the education system - especially at the university level - this is a major challenge that requires comprehensive understanding and resolution. Currently, academic programs are becoming more diverse and require greater effort from students. As a result, these demands often lead to stress and anxiety. Furthermore, students may feel unsupported by lecturers or lack access to academic resources, which complicates their learning process.

Another pressing issue is financial difficulty, which poses a significant burden on students, affecting their ability to focus on studies and self-development. Finally, loneliness and difficulties in

building relationships can create psychological instability. Psychological difficulties are defined as limitations or deficiencies in perception, attitude, and behavior, which create obstacles for individuals in their activities. These difficulties can also be understood as unfavorable psychological traits that arise during activities, impeding progress and negatively affecting outcomes.

Identifying measures to help students overcome psychological challenges and enabling them to develop reasonable learning strategies and awareness about these issues is essential to improving their quality of life. Overcoming such difficulties not only contributes to success in their activities and daily life but also supports the development of their personality in line with social standards, preparing them for increasingly demanding future careers.

2. Main content:

2.1. Students' Psychological Difficulties – Theoretical Perspectives:

Research into students' life challenges has long attracted attention from scholars and authorities in countries with advanced education systems, such as B. Kirsch, C. Wagner, S. Franz, L.A. Regus, A.L. Liktarnikov, O.A. Basinger, D.H. Demidov, Quinn, Muldoon, and Hollingworth. According to Quinn, Muldoon, and Hollingworth (2002), students often struggle to understand academic requirements, manage their time, apply effective learning methods, and transfer acquired knowledge into exams.

In another study, Coll, Ali, Bonato, and Rohindra (2006) summarized the main reasons students dropped specific courses, including the abstract nature of subjects, complex mathematical content, and a shortage of passionate, competent teachers.

In a more recent study, Palmer and Puri (2006) identified key groups of difficulties faced by university students:

- (1) Separation from family: Leaving home for university life brings homesickness and concern for loved ones.
- (2) Adjustment to a new living environment: Students must find suitable accommodation, manage finances, and resolve potential conflicts with roommates.
- (3) Nutrition and health challenges: With limited budgets, students must plan and prepare healthy meals and maintain physical activity.
- (4) Academic and career expectations: Students question whether their chosen major aligns with their aspirations, and whether to continue or switch fields or institutions.
- (5) Social integration: Many students find it hard to build new social relationships and engage in community life.
- (6) Financial constraints: Covering essential living expenses, textbooks, and learning tools is often a struggle.

Regarding disadvantaged students, Goodwin (2006) studied the university experiences of minority immigrant students in the U.S. Results

showed a wide range of challenges, varying in scope and impact across academic, social, personal, and environmental domains. Some students viewed these as life challenges that fostered growth, while others suffered significant mental strain that negatively impacted their academic performance and career prospects.

In Vietnam, although there have been studies on student challenges, many classifications exist depending on the psychological nature or educational level. For this paper, we adopt the classification system of author Nguyen Thi Minh Hang, who identified four main types of psychological difficulties faced by students:

- (1) Self-related difficulties
- (2) Academic psychological challenges
- (3) Relationship-related issues
- (4) Difficulties in career orientation

(Nguyen Thi Minh Hang & Nguyen Thi Thu Trang, 2009)

Finding appropriate solutions to these psychological issues, as well as helping students build effective learning strategies and raise awareness about their potential mental struggles, is crucial to enhancing their overall well-being. Addressing these challenges will help students succeed in their academic and personal lives. Most importantly, their personalities will develop in a manner aligned with societal norms and meet the increasing demands of their future professions (Do Van Binh, 2008).

In the current social context, with increasing complexities and pressures, students' mental health is an urgent matter that must be addressed. At institutions like Thu Dau Mot University, these challenges require comprehensive attention and solutions. As academic programs grow in diversity and rigor, students are under increasing stress. A lack of adequate support from faculty or academic resources can hinder learning, while financial strain limits personal growth. Additionally, loneliness and the difficulty of building relationships contribute to psychological instability.

2.2. The Current State of Psychological Difficulties among University Students:

To assess the extent of psychological difficulties among students, the author conducted a survey of 400 first-year students at Hanoi National

University of Education across four majors: natural sciences, social sciences, foreign languages, and specialized disciplines.

2.2.1. The Current Situation of First-Year Students' Life Difficulties (see Table 1)

No.	Difficulties	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Rank
1	In academic activities	3,50	0,43	3
2	In communication	3,18	0,54	4
3	In social activities	3,58	0,56	1
4	In daily routines	3,52	0,65	2

Table 1. The Current Situation of Life Difficulties Among First-Year Students

Table 1 shows that the areas in which first-year students face the most difficulties are social activities (Mean Score = 3.58), followed by difficulties in daily living (Mean Score = 3.52), and thirdly, difficulties in academic activities (Mean Score = 3.50). All three areas are assessed by students as posing a high level of difficulty. This can be explained by the fact that these types of activities at the university level are very different from those in high school. From the first year of university, students are expected to actively participate in more social activities to

affirm their roles and positions within society. Adapting to new content and teaching methods at the university level also presents a major challenge. Additionally, in terms of daily living, students must be independent and self-reliant in managing their finances and other aspects of life, which can lead to considerable difficulties—especially for those coming from distant provinces to study in urban areas.

2.2.2. Difficulties in Academic Activities of First-Year Students (see Table 2)

Category	Specific Difficulties	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Rank
1. Class Schedule	Classes start too early	3.80	1.14	10
	Class schedules and time slots are not reasonable	3.32	1.16	26
	Category Average	3.56	0.87	
2. Facilities	Inadequate university facilities	3.31	1.08	27
	Classrooms are cramped and hot	3.51	1.10	23
	Classrooms are inconvenient and require moving around frequently	3.62	1.22	17
	Equipment often malfunctions (projectors, microphones, etc.)	3.25	1.08	30
	Lack of study space	3.28	1.16	28
	No rest area for students during lunch breaks	4.00	1.07	4
	Category Average	3.50	0.72	
3. Learning Tools	Lack of tools (computers, internet, etc.)	3.74	1.07	11
	Insufficient study materials	3.09	1.11	39
	Difficulty finding materials	3.46	1.07	25
	Many textbooks are difficult to understand	3.85	0.96	7

	Category Average	3.54	0.75	
4. Course Registration	The credit-based registration process is too complex	3.54	1.21	22
	Uncertainty about how to choose suitable courses	3.58	1.07	20
	Category Average	3.56	0.94	
5. Study Content	Diverse content causes difficulty adapting	3.65	1.04	16
	Many lessons are difficult	3.83	0.91	8
	Too many assignments	3.17	1.03	35
	Overwhelming amount of knowledge	3.67	1.00	13
	Requires too much reasoning, hard to adapt	3.61	0.95	19
	Many theoretical subjects lack practical application	4.08	0.88	2
	Category Average	3.67	0.67	
6. Study Methods	New study methods are hard to adapt to	4.54	0.98	1
	Weak and lacking study skills	3.62	1.00	17
	Poor self-study habits at home	3.55	1.10	21
	Group study is difficult	4.06	2.20	3
	Ineffective presentation skills	3.82	0.86	9
	Don't know how to study textbooks independently	3.92	0.86	5
	Don't know how to plan study schedule	3.66	0.92	15
	Category Average	4.02	0.68	
7. Teaching Methods of Lecturers	Teaching methods are hard to adapt to	3.48	0.95	24
	Some lecturers teach too fast	3.67	1.02	13
	Some lecturers lack focus in their teaching	3.24	1.02	31
	Some lecturers are hard to hear clearly	3.08	1.17	40
	Some lecturers cancel class without notice	3.10	1.22	37
	Some lecturers are not engaging	3.68	0.99	12
	Category Average	3.40	0.65	
8. Exams	Exam schedules are unstable, hard to track	3.12	1.14	36
	Exam formats and content are too heavy	3.28	1.00	28
	Category Average	3.20	0.89	
9. Learning Attitude	Poor study attitude	3.00	1.05	41
	Laziness	3.10	2.35	37
	Lack of concentration while studying	3.20	1.05	34

Table 2. Difficulties in Academic Activities of First-Year Students

Among the nine groups of academic difficulties, there are six groups that first-year students rated as highly challenging. The foremost is the group related to learning methods (overall average score = 4.02, ranked first), followed by issues concerning study time, school facilities, learning

equipment, credit-based course registration, and learning content (overall average scores > 3.5). The remaining three groups—teachers' teaching methods, examinations, and students' learning attitudes—were assessed by students as moderately difficult.

A detailed survey of 41 specific academic difficulties shows that the most significant challenge for first-year students is the difficulty in adapting to new learning methods (average score = 4.54, ranked first). Additionally, there are 22 issues that students rated as highly difficult (average scores from 3.51 to 4.08), while the remaining 18 issues were considered moderately difficult (average scores from 3.0 to 3.48).

This outcome is due to the significant differences between high school and university education. At

the university level, the academic content is specialized, diverse, and complex. Learning methods require students to be active, self-directed, and creative. University study is truly an intellectual activity—intense, high-pressure, and distinctly selective—so many first-year students have not yet been able to adapt

2.2.3. Difficulties in Communication Among First-Year Students B (see Table 3)

Problem Category	Communication Difficulties	Average score	Standard deviation	Rank
1. With Friends	Friends are not close or friendly	2,74	1,17	32
	Cannot remember all classmates' names/faces	2,44	1,17	35
	Conflicts easily arise due to lack of harmony	2,78	1,13	27
	Friends are confrontational and do not listen to each other	2,96	1,12	23
	Few friends, no close ones	2,83	1,19	26
	Little care or respect for each other's interests	2,76	1,07	29
	No suitable group of friends to study/play with	2,66	1,15	34
	Many friends are quiet, hard to integrate	3,22	1,07	18
	Many people are shy with new friends	3,34	1,08	14
	Language barriers hinder understanding	2,76	1,17	29
	Average total score	2,85	0,71	
2. With Opposite-Sex Friends	Unable to build close relationships	3,28	2,36	17
	Difficult to establish a platonic relationship	3,02	1,19	21
	Average total score	3,15	1,50	
3. With Teachers	Still feel shy or distant	3,76	0,95	5
	Hard to talk, afraid to approach or express ideas	3,70	1,01	6
	Many teachers are unfriendly to students	2,99	1,09	22
	Many teachers do not actively answer questions	2,75	1,07	31

	Little time to talk to teachers	3,84	0,93	2
	Average total score	3,41	0,69	
4. With Administrative Staff	Communication still has many barriers	3,92	0,99	1
	Staff are not enthusiastic in guiding students	3,50	1,11	9
	Difficult to contact staff	3,60	1,03	8
	Don't know who to ask when having problems	3,84	1,01	2
	Hesitant when interacting with staff	3,80	1,03	4
	Average total score	3,73	0,80	
5. With Parents	Parents don't understand school-related problems	2,94	1,23	24
	Parents only care about high grades	2,94	1,34	24
	Differing viewpoints on many issues	2,78	1,31	27
	Parents struggle with paying tuition	2,70	1,25	33
	Rarely confide difficulties with parents	3,35	1,26	13
	Average total score	2,94	0,88	
6. With Oneself	Personally face difficulties in communication	3,36	1,12	11
	Lack of confidence, shy in communication	3,34	1,17	14
	Lack of communication knowledge and skills	3,36	1,13	11
	Lack of integration skills with others	3,17	1,17	19
	Poor emotional control, especially when angry	3,32	2,30	16
	Often feel sad and lonely	3,62	1,10	7
	Often feel unfamiliar and out of place	3,41	1,14	10
	Hard to make friends	3,08	1,26	20
	Average total score	3,33	0,89	

Table 3. Communication Difficulties of First-Year Students

Among the six groups of communication-related difficulties, first-year students rated the group involving communication with administrative staff as the most challenging (Overall Average Score = 3.73, ranked 1st). The remaining five groups were rated as moderately difficult (Overall

Average Score < 3.5). The fact that students experience significant difficulties when interacting with administrative staff is an issue that university educators should pay close attention to.

An analysis of 35 specific issues across the six groups of communication difficulties revealed that first-year students rated the following as highly difficult: "Communication with administrative staff still faces many obstacles" (Average Score = 3.92, ranked 1st), followed by "Difficulty contacting administrative staff" (Average Score = 3.84, ranked 2nd), and "Feeling anxious when interacting with administrative staff" (Average Score = 3.80, ranked 4th). In addition, "Lack of time to talk with lecturers" also received a high rating (Average Score = 3.84, ranked 2nd), as well as "Still hesitant and feeling a distance when communicating with lecturers" (Average Score = 3.76), and "Difficulty talking, reluctance to approach or express opinions to lecturers" (Average Score = 3.70).

From these results, it is clear that most communication difficulties encountered by first-year students involve interactions with administrative staff and lecturers. Therefore, when communicating with students, it would be beneficial for administrative staff and lecturers to

adjust their communication styles to better support students' adaptation.

In addition, a notable personal issue that first-year students rated as highly difficult was "Often feeling sad and lonely" (Average Score = 3.62). This is understandable, as most first-year students live independently and study away from their families, no longer receiving the same level of care, support, and attention from parents and loved ones. As a result, they often feel sad, lonely, homesick, and emotionally vulnerable when facing challenges alone, which in turn affects their communication ability.

Only one issue was rated as less difficult: "The class is too large, making it hard to remember everyone's name or face" (Average Score = 2.44, the lowest ranked). Thus, in the credit-based learning system, not remembering classmates' names or faces does not appear to be a major concern for first-year students.

2.2.4. Social Activity Difficulties of First-Year Students (see Table 4)

Category	Specific Difficulties in Social Activities	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Rank
1. Time	Lack of time to participate	3.89	0.90	2
2. Facilities	Lack of facilities such as transportation, spending money, phones, etc.	3.90	1.11	1
	Lack of conditions for participation such as talent or abilities	3.66	2.23	7
	Average Score (Category 2)	3.78	1.35	
3. Information	Lack of adequate, complete, and accurate information	3.68	0.95	6
	Not knowing the location where activities take place	3.46	1.07	13
	Not understanding the purpose of the activities	3.54	1.07	10
	Average Score (Category 3)	3.56	0.87	
4. Student Union Activities	Many activities do not attract students	3.58	1.04	9
	Many activities lack creativity	3.70	2.82	5
	Many movements are not organized at appropriate times	3.82	0.99	3

	Activities are overly formal, ineffective, and lack significance	3.71	1.04	4
	Lack of clubs to organize and gather students	3.59	1.10	8
	Average Score (Category 4)	3.68	0.98	
5. Class Leadership	Class leaders do not know how to effectively organize social activities	3.54	1.12	10
	Class leaders socialize within their own groups and focus on persuading only their group members to join	3.50	1.21	12
	Average Score (Category 5)	3.52	1.03	
6. Personal Factors	Personally not active in participating in movements	3.02	1.13	16
	Lack of confidence when participating	3.12	1.15	15
	Lack of social activity skills	3.20	1.15	14
	Unwillingness to participate	2.47	1.18	17
	Average Score (Category 6)	2.95	0.88	

Table 4. Difficulties in Social Activities of First-Year Students

Table 4 shows that among the six groups of difficulties related to social activities, as many as five were rated by first-year students as highly challenging. The foremost issue is time constraints (Overall Average Score = 3.89, ranked 1st), followed by limitations in facilities and conditions for participation, student union (Youth Union) activities, access to information, and the effectiveness of the class leadership team (Overall Average Scores ranging from 3.52 to 3.78).

The only group rated as moderately difficult is personal difficulties of the students themselves (Overall Average Score = 2.95, the lowest ranking).

Out of the 17 specific social activity-related difficulties surveyed, 12 were rated by students as highly difficult (Average Score > 3.50, ranked 1 to 12). This indicates that major barriers to students' participation in social activities mostly stem from lack of time, inadequate facilities and conditions, and insufficient information. One noteworthy concern is that the Youth Union's activities are not sufficiently engaging to motivate active participation from students. Moreover, the class leadership team has not been effective in organizing activities, causing further difficulties for students in participating.

The remaining four issues, ranked 13 to 16, were considered moderately difficult (Average Scores between 3.02 and 3.46). Only one issue was rated as slightly difficult: "Lack of willingness to participate" (Average Score = 2.47, lowest ranking).

Thus, most of the difficulties that first-year students face in social activities are caused more by external factors than by internal ones. This outcome should be of particular interest to those involved in organizing student union and association activities.

2.3. Solutions for Overcoming Psychological Difficulties Among University Students in the Current Context:

2.3.1. From the School and Faculty

Schools and departments should create favorable conditions to support students currently facing psychological difficulties or in need of psychological assistance. Universities should establish dedicated Psychological Counseling Offices staffed with trained and professional school psychologists. Investment—both intellectual and financial—is essential for the development of a well-qualified counseling team. These offices must be active and equipped with

appropriate tools, psychological assessments, and facilities to provide timely and effective support for students seeking psychological help.

A team of well-trained professionals can not only help students solve their immediate psychological problems but also play a crucial role in prevention and early intervention when new psychological challenges arise.

Moreover, universities should boost student motivation by providing guidance on academic and campus life. This helps students understand their university and future careers, shaping their study goals, career ideals, and worldview. Schools should regularly hold direct meetings and dialogues with students to listen to their concerns, needs, and difficulties, both academically and personally, so that timely support can be provided.

Universities should also consider students' psychological characteristics when designing study schedules and exam timetables to avoid overwhelming them, which may impair cognitive performance and academic outcomes. More seminars on study skills should be organized—particularly those focused on learning methods—so students can identify effective strategies to reduce stress and adapt to the university environment.

Universities should encourage the involvement of student organizations by organizing more group activities to help students build relationships, enjoy their environment, and feel more connected to campus life.

2.3.2. From Lecturers

Lecturers should pay attention to students' psychological states and use that understanding to inform how they plan lessons and choose teaching methods. Being more approachable and caring—beyond just classroom interaction—can help close the gap between teachers and students. This promotes understanding, allows lecturers to identify students' needs and desires, and helps avoid placing unnecessary pressure on them.

By learning about students' emotional and psychological needs, lecturers can provide timely

support and identify early signs of students needing counseling. Academic advisors play a vital role and should serve as a strong bridge between students and lecturers.

In addition to delivering subject knowledge, lecturers should also guide students in learning techniques—particularly subject-specific study strategies—to foster effective independent learning. Frequent interaction and communication between lecturers and students will help build trust, allowing educators to better tailor course content and support students in overcoming psychological challenges.

2.3.3. From Students Themselves

Students who are experiencing psychological difficulties or need counseling should take the initiative to seek appropriate support services or adopt coping strategies to avoid negative impacts.

They should be mentally prepared to face challenges and actively seek ways to overcome them. When necessary, students should consult professional psychological services to maintain mental resilience and optimism.

Students should also enhance their awareness of their chosen academic field and understand its value to themselves, their families, and society. Setting clear and realistic academic goals aligned with personal interests is crucial.

From the beginning of their university life, students should focus on studying and avoid procrastinating or postponing serious study to later years. They should actively participate in class discussions and learning activities, identify their own weaknesses, and seek help from lecturers, peers, and senior students when needed.

2.3.4. From Families

Families must pay attention and find ways to support students who are experiencing psychological difficulties. Parents should regularly observe their children's emotional changes and respond with suitable guidance and communication methods.

They should maintain close relationships with their children and understand the challenges they

face while living away from home or adapting to a new environment. This will help parents offer appropriate and timely emotional support in all situations.

3. Conclusion:

In the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the integration of technology into psychological counseling has become an area of growing interest for individuals, society, and the scientific community.

The study of psychological difficulties among university students is based on two key foundations. First, human activities do not always proceed smoothly due to differing goals, responsibilities, and contexts, which inevitably lead to challenges. These challenges require personal effort to overcome, or the intended goals may not be achieved. Second, university students now face new academic demands that are very different from those in high school, leading to increased psychological pressure during their studies.

Therefore, identifying strategies to overcome these psychological difficulties is crucial. It helps students find effective learning methods, become more aware of potential mental challenges in academic and personal life, and proactively manage them.

This study has proposed several practical solutions to improve the psychological well-being of university students in today's educational environment.

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