

Emotion Management and Social Support in Vietnam National University Students: A Case Study

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Abstract

This study delves into the intricate relationship between students' perceived social support and their engagement in emotion management within the context of Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City. Drawing data from a sample of 675 participants through comprehensive surveys, this research employs a quantitative approach to unveil nuanced patterns and correlations. Findings reveal a multifaceted pattern of student emotion management behaviors, with male students demonstrating higher engagement levels, primarily utilizing strategies centered around emotional awareness and self-support. Notably, participants reported a relatively modest overall level of social support, with friends emerging as the primary source. Disparities in emotion management engagement, particularly among students in engineering disciplines, underscore the impact of academic contexts. Furthermore, the study uncovers a positive correlation between perceived social support and the frequency of engaging in emotion management behaviors, emphasizing the role of family and significant others in shaping students' emotional coping strategies. These results highlight the need for tailored interventions to enhance emotion management skills and foster robust social support networks in educational settings. To sum up, this study underscores the importance of creating a supportive environment that nurtures students' emotional well-being alongside their academic pursuits, contributing to holistic student development and highlighting the need for strategies that bolster emotion management abilities and reinforce social support structures in educational contexts.

Keywords: Emotional management, Social support, University students, Perceived social support, Emotional well-being

INTRODUCTION

The Vietnamese education system has recently prioritized students' emotional well-being in response to school incidents, highlighting shortcomings in emotional management skills [1]. While efforts have been made to develop practical strategies for emotional regulation, a notable gap persists in understanding the role of social support. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory underscores the dynamic interplay between individuals and their environments, affecting both physical and mental development [2, 3]. Within this theoretical framework, social support emerges as a crucial factor shaping students' emotional management within school and family contexts.

Building on this foundation, Kitahara *et al.*'s (2020) research on Japanese students reveals a reciprocal relationship between emotional management and social support, leading to improved schooling adjustment [4]. Similarly, Ho and Nguyen's (2021) study highlights the interconnectedness of emotion management and social support, underlining the significant prevalence of depression among Vietnamese students [5]. These studies collectively underscore the importance of social support in shaping the emotional landscapes of university students. However, it's important to

note that while these studies provide valuable insights, limited research has directly addressed the nuanced interplay between emotion management and social support within the Vietnamese context. Furthermore, studies by Zheng *et al.* (2021) have shown that cultural factors significantly shape emotion management and social support dynamics in Asian educational settings, further emphasizing the importance of considering cultural nuances when studying these interactions [6]. Additionally, studies by Lopez-Zafra (2019)

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has explored students' mental health outcomes, indicating that effective emotion management and strong social support networks contribute to better mental health and well-being [7].

Often, existing research treats social support and emotion management as variables impacting broader psychological traits without delving into the intricacies of their interaction [8-10]. Consequently, our study seeks to bridge this gap by explicitly investigating how these two factors interact and influence each other among students at Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City, providing a more comprehensive understanding of their dynamic relationship within the Vietnamese educational milieu. In light of this research gap, our study aims to address two pivotal aspects: (i) evaluating the level of perceived social support among Vietnamese university students and (ii) examining students' perspectives on how social support influences their emotional management, specifically within engineering disciplines. The study draws on the theoretical underpinning of social support defined by Shumaker and Brownell (1984), involving resource exchange to enhance well-being [11]. The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) by Zimet *et al.* (1988) is employed for consistent cross-cultural assessment of perceived social support [12]. Emotion management, a topic of global interest, encompasses functional and individual skill-based perspectives. Eisenberg *et al.*'s (2000) comprehensive framework aligns with the study's scope, encompassing reactions to external stimuli and regulation of emotional expressions [13]. This framework categorizes emotion management skills into initiation, maintenance, inhibition, modification, and alteration of emotional behaviors, including observable facial expressions, gestures, and physiological responses. To measure these skills, the study employs Berking *et al.*'s (2014) emotion management skills scale, adapted to the Vietnamese context [14].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample Collection

The study's sample size was determined based on Watson's (2001) recommendation, appropriate for population sizes between 50,000 and 100,000 [15]. This guided the inclusion of 675 actively participating university students, comprising 213 males (31.6%) and 426 females (68.4%). The distribution across academic years included second-year students (53.0%), freshmen (21.9%), third-year students (16.0%), and senior-year students (9.0%).

Measurements

To assess participants' perceived social support, the MSPSS consisted of 12 statements categorized into family, friends,

and other significant individuals [12]. Responses were collected using a Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The cumulative scores represented perceived social support, with higher scores indicating elevated support levels. The interpretation was categorized into predefined ranges: low support (1-2.9), moderate support (3-5), and high support (5.1-7). Berking *et al.* (2014) developed the emotion management skills scale to assess participants' skills within the Vietnamese context [14]. Comprising 27 items across nine factors, responses were recorded on a Likert scale (0 to 4) reflecting the frequency of skill utilization within a week. This scale was adapted to the Vietnamese context for consistency.

Data Analysis

Mean scores were computed for individual factors and a composite score for emotion management skills, providing insights into the frequency of skill usage. Higher mean scores indicated more frequent utilization of these skills. The data was presented as means with accompanying standard deviations. To determine statistical significance, p-values were calculated, with a significance level set at $p < 0.05$. A range of statistical analyses was employed, including t-tests, ANOVA, correlation analysis, assessment of Cronbach's Alpha, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), and single-variable regression analysis with adjusted R-squared. These analyses were conducted using SPSS Version 26.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Emotion Management Skills and Perceived Social Support Scales among Vietnamese University Students

In our study involving a participant cohort of 675 students, the assessment of emotion management skills revealed discernible Cronbach's Alpha indices for each respective factor, as outlined in **Table 1**. These indices were as follows: 0.706 (Attention toward feelings), 0.704 (Body perception of feelings), 0.720 (Clarity of feelings), 0.745 (Understanding of feelings), 0.701 (Acceptance of feelings), 0.718 (Tolerance and endurance of feelings), 0.723 (Readiness to confront undesired emotions), 0.713 (Self-support), and 0.728 (Modification). This comprehensive analysis provides insights into the reliability of our assessment tool.

EFA demonstrated the suitability of the dataset, as indicated by a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index of 0.847 and the statistical significance of Bartlett's test ($p = 0.000$). Moreover, the extracted factors collectively accounted for 66.76% of the variance, exceeding the recommended threshold of 50%. Nine distinct characteristics were identified, each characterized by factor loadings ranging from 0.629 to 0.855, indicating robustness.

Table 1. Reliability testing and exploratory factor analysis for the emotion management scale among students of Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City

Emotion management scale	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha		Exploratory Factors Analysis		
		Cronbach's Alpha Index	Variable correlation – total	KMO	Eigenvalues and Total Variance extracted	Factor loading
Attention toward feelings	2	0.706	0.653-0.767	0.847 (p = 0.000)	1.020 (66.76%)	0.629 - 0.855
Body perception of feelings	3	0.704	0.503-0.530			
Clarity of feelings	3	0.720	0.475-0.591			
Understanding of feelings	3	0.745	0.533-0.604			
Acceptance of feelings	3	0.701	0.497-0.566			
Tolerate and endure feelings	3	0.718	0.489-0.577			
Readiness to confront undesired emotions	3	0.723	0.487-0.581			
Self – Support	3	0.713	0.514-0.548			
Modification	3	0.728	0.546-0.554			

Table 2. Reliability testing and exploratory factor analysis results for the Multidimensional Scale of perceived social support among students of Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City

The Multidimensional Scale of perceived social support	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha		Exploratory Factors Analysis		
		Cronbach's Alpha Index	Variable correlation – total	KMO	Eigenvalues, Total Variance extracted	Factor loading
Family	4	0.870	0.667-0.795	0.852 (p = 0.000)	1.99 (73.61%)	0.778 - 0.879
Friends	4	0.866	0.671-0.753			
Significant Other	4	0.899	0.710-0.812			

Turning to the MSPSS, a meticulous examination of students' perceived social support revealed strong Cronbach's Alpha indices for each factor, as in **Table 2**. These indices were as follows: 0.870 (Family), 0.866 (Friends), and 0.899 (Significant Other). This detailed analysis affirms the reliability of the assessment tool across different dimensions.

Exploratory Factor Analysis further supported the dataset's suitability, with a KMO index of 0.852 and the statistical significance of Bartlett's test (p = 0.000). The extracted factors collectively accounted for 73.61% of the variance, surpassing the recommended threshold. Three distinct factors emerged, characterized by factor loadings ranging from 0.778 to 0.879, reinforcing the factors' robustness and reliability.

Perception of Emotion Management among Students at Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City

As displayed in **Table 3**, Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City students exhibited sporadic engagement with emotional management skills, with an average score (M) of 2.73 and a standard deviation (StD) of 0.46. A closer examination highlighted nuanced patterns, indicating specific facets of emotional management in which students exhibited

reduced inclination within the university's academic context. These dimensions included a decline in Attention toward feelings (M = 2.93; StD = 0.74), Understanding of feelings (M = 2.83; StD = 0.73), and Self-Support (M = 2.98; StD = 0.80). This trend aligns with students' psychological development trajectories, reflecting their emotional resilience. Notably, male students demonstrated heightened engagement in utilizing emotion management skills compared to their female peers, particularly in dimensions like attention toward feelings, clarity of feelings, understanding of feelings, tolerance, endurance, and readiness to confront undesired emotions.

Statistically discernible disparities emerged in emotion management engagement among diverse university students, as illustrated in **Table 4**. While the F statistic exceeded the conventional threshold of 0.05, post hoc analysis revealed more intricate distinctions within distinct university cohorts. Notably, students pursuing engineering disciplines demonstrated less involvement in emotion management skills, particularly in understanding emotions, accepting feelings, self-support, and applying modification strategies compared to peers from other academic backgrounds.

Table 3. Perception of emotional management engagement frequency among students in Vietnam Tertiary Education Institutions at Ho Chi Minh City

Emotion Management scale	Mean	StD	Male	Female	p	t
Attention toward feelings	2.9311	.74047	3.0282	2.8864	.021*	2.320
Body perception of feelings	2.6701	.75905	2.7371	2.6392	.120	1.558
Clarity of feelings	2.7951	.72266	2.8811	2.7554	.036*	2.105
Understanding of feelings	2.8370	.73046	2.9233	2.7973	.037*	2.089
Acceptance of feelings	2.6030	.82397	2.6745	2.5700	.126	1.533
Tolerate and endure feelings	2.5398	.88034	2.6557	2.4863	.020*	2.331
Readiness to confront undesired emotions	2.5467	.78809	2.6995	2.4762	.001**	3.449
Self – Support	2.9842	.80270	2.9922	2.9805	.861	.175
Modification	2.7719	.76627	2.8372	2.7417	.132	1.507
Emotion management	2.7348	.46481	2.8176	2.6966	.002**	3.164

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01

Table 4. Perception of emotional management engagement frequency among students in Vietnam Tertiary Education at Ho Chi Minh City

Emotion Management scale	Total	USSH	HCMIU	UIT	HCMUS	HCMUT	UEL	F	p	Post Hoc Tests
Attention toward feelings	2.9311	2.9921	3.0076	2.8694	2.7823	2.8258	3.0208	1.750	.140	p > 0.05
	.74047	.72101	.71518	.78742	.85229	.74277	.60186			
Body perception of feelings	2.6701	2.7196	2.6970	2.6045	2.5645	2.6479	2.7130	.731	.601	p > 0.05
	.75905	.71339	.79039	.83588	.85483	.75772	.64835			
Clarity of feelings	2.7951	2.8545	2.6818	2.8184	2.6237	2.7453	2.8565	1.586	.162	p > 0.05
	.72266	.67851	.69290	.79746	.85248	.71954	.61241			
Understanding of feelings	2.8370	2.9180	2.9293	2.7711	2.6129	2.7528	2.8889	2.553	.065	USSH>HCMUS (p=0.003) HCMIU>HCMUS (p=0.014) UEL>HCMUS (p=0.029)
	.73046	.68201	.69310	.74973	.93931	.72042	.65721			
Acceptance of feelings	2.6030	2.7421	2.7020	2.4478	2.4516	2.4195	2.6713	4.069	.001	USSH>UIT (p=0.001) USSH>HCMUS (p=0.012) USSH>HCMUT (p=0.001) HCMIU>UIT (p=0.038) HCMIU>HCMUT (p=0.033)
	.82397	.80010	.76489	.86817	.91754	.81886	.69986			
Tolerate and endure feelings	2.5398	2.6653	2.5303	2.4751	2.3011	2.4569	2.5370	2.262	.088	USSH>UIT (p=0.043) USSH>HCMUS (p=0.003)
	.88034	.85955	.83712	.87036	1.10424	.82936	.81372			
Readiness to confront undesired emotions	2.5467	2.6138	2.5758	2.4876	2.3172	2.4794	2.6759	2.120	.088	USSH>HCMUS (p=0.008) UEL>HCMUS (p=0.009)
	.78809	.77923	.75909	.82935	.93783	.74018	.63781			
Self – Support	2.9842	3.1336	3.0000	2.8831	2.7796	2.8315	3.0000	3.705	.004	USSH>UIT (p=0.003) USSH>HCMUS (p=0.002) USSH>HCMUT (p=0.002)
	.80270	.69416	.78664	.84984	1.00625	.88352	.70099			
Modification	2.7719	2.8942	2.7222	2.6493	2.3871	2.7491	2.9769	6.449	.000	USSH>UIT (p=0.002) USSH>HCMUS (p=0.000) HCMIU>HCMUS (p=0.012)

	.76627	.71120	.79007	.83102	.85612	.71647	.63128											UEL>HCMIU (p=0.047)
																		UIT>HCMUS (p=0.023)
																		UEL>UIT (p=0.003)
																		UEL>HCMUS (p=0.000)
																		HCMUS> HCMUT (p=0.004)
	2.7348	2.8310	2.7512	2.6596	2.5261	2.6500	2.8077											USSH>UIT (p=0.000)
																		USSH>HCMUS (p=0.000)
																		USSH>HCMUT (p=0.001)
																		HCMIU>HCMUS (p=0.005)
																		UEL>UIT (p=0.026)
																		UEL>HCMUS (p=0.000)
																		UEL>HCMUT (p=0.029)
Emotion management	.46481	.43103	.43000	.47281	.59257	.45601	.38780	6.590	.000									

Note: USSH: University of Social Sciences and Humanities; HCMIU: Ho Chi Minh City University of Information Technology; UIT: University of Information Technology; HCMUS: University of Science, Ho Chi Minh City; HCMUT: Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology; UEL: University of Economics and Law

Perception of Social Support among Students at Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City

A detailed analysis of students' perceptions of social support within Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City is presented in **Table 5**. The investigation outcomes indicated that students at this institution tend to perceive their social support level as relatively modest, with a mean score (M) of

2.39 and a standard deviation (StD) of 0.77. Further investigation revealed nuanced distinctions within perceived sources of social support. Notably, students predominantly attributed their support to friends (M = 2.6; StD = 0.92), while perceived support from family and significant others received notably lower scores. This collective data underscores a view that students' overall social support within this academic institution is limited.

Table 5. Perception of social support among students in Vietnam Tertiary Education at Ho Chi Minh City

The Multidimensional Scale of perceived social support	Mean	StD	Male	Female	p	t
Family	2.3441	1.02457	2.5411	2.2532	.000***	3.419
Friends	2.6007	.92175	2.5704	2.6147	.562	.580
Significant Other	2.2511	1.20440	2.2934	2.2316	.536	.620
Total	2.3986	.77697	2.4683	2.3665	.114	1.584

Note: ***p<0.001

Gender-based differences emerged in students' perceptions of social support, particularly within the familial context. Statistically significant discrepancies were noted between male and female students, with male students perceiving higher levels of support from their families than their female counterparts.

perceptions of social support and their emotion regulation at Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City, as outlined in **Table 6**. Findings highlighted a positive correlation between emotional management proficiency and perceived social support, particularly in family and significant others. Specific facets of emotional management displayed favorable associations, notably clarifying feelings, readiness to confront undesired emotions, and implementing modification strategies. This suggests that a heightened perception of social support aligns with greater engagement in these emotion management facets.

Impact of Students' Perceived Social Support on Emotion Regulation at Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City

Our study delved into the interplay between students'

Table 6. Correlation analysis between students' perceived social support and their emotional regulation among students at Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City

Social Support	Emotion Management									
	EM 1	EM 2	EM 3	EM 4	EM 5	EM 6	EM 7	EM 8	EM 9	EM 10
Family	.245**	.229**	.272**	.250**	.205**	.224**	.307**	.243**	.291**	.422**
Friends	.184**	.145**	.216**	.181**	.213**	.207**	.251**	.165**	.232**	.336**
Significant Other	.279**	.380**	.322**	.350**	.249**	.272**	.274**	.186**	.328**	.490**
Total	.325**	.354**	.372**	.362**	.303**	.321**	.376**	.268**	.389**	.572**

Note: **p<0.01; EM 1: Attention toward feelings; EM 2: Body perception of feelings; EM 3: Clarify of feelings; EM 4: Understanding of feelings; EM 5: Acceptance of feelings; EM 6: Tolerate and endure feelings; EM 7: Readiness to confront undesired emotion; EM 8: self - support; EM 9: Modification; EM 10: Emotion Management.

Furthermore, this relationship extended to various sub-factors within the social support spectrum, with distinct correlations with students' emotion regulation. Increased perception of support from family and friends correlated with a greater readiness to confront undesired emotions, modify emotional

responses, and elucidate feelings. Strong correlations between significant others and emotion management were noted, particularly in domains such as body perception of feelings, understanding emotions, and applying modification strategies.

Table 7. Influence of students' perceived social support on their engagement in emotional management among students in Vietnam Tertiary Education Institutions at Ho Chi Minh City

Emotion Management	Family (R ²)	Friends (R ²)	Significant Other (R ²)	Social Support (R ²)
Attention toward feelings	.058***	.032***	.077***	.104***
Body perception of feelings	.051***	.020***	.143***	.124***
Clarity of feelings	.073***	.045***	.102***	.137***
Understanding of feelings	.061***	.031***	.121***	.130***
Acceptance of feelings	.041***	.044***	.061***	.091***
Tolerate and endure feelings	.049***	.042***	.072***	.102***
Readiness to confront undesired emotions	.093***	.062***	.074***	.140***
Self-Support	.058***	.026***	.033***	.071***
Modification	.083***	.053***	.106***	.150***
Emotion Management	.177***	.112***	.239***	.326***

Note: ***: p < 0.001

Results demonstrated that students' perception of social support influenced their emotion management behaviors (Table 7). The impact of social support perception accounted for 32.6% of the variability in emotion management behaviors. Notably, sub-factors of social support exhibited varying correlations with specific emotion management sub-factors. Significant others had the most substantial impact (23.9%), followed by family (17.7%) and friends (11.2%). Additionally, students' perception of social support played a role in utilizing modification strategies (15%) and clarifying feelings (13.7%) in emotion management.

The outcomes of this study offer valuable insights into the intricate relationship between emotion management and perceived social support among students within the Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City context. The frequency of engagement in certain emotion management dimensions by male students is notably higher compared to their female counterparts. A closer examination reveals students' pronounced attention to feelings, deep understanding of emotions, and commendable self-support during emotion management endeavors. These findings underscore the importance of these dimensions in students' emotional growth and coping strategies.

Moreover, the significant and positive correlation between perceived social support and emotion management behaviors invites further investigation. A compelling direction for future research is delving into the mechanisms or theoretical frameworks that elucidate how social support influences students' effective emotion management. Notably, our data highlight the substantial impact of family and significant

others on students' emotion management practices, indicating their pivotal role in shaping emotional experiences and the ability to navigate challenging emotional situations. However, existing literature still needs to include more, especially in directly examining the relationship between emotion management frequency and students' perceived social support within the tertiary education context. Our study contributes to filling this gap by illuminating this relationship's significance.

Regarding implications, our findings resonate with the understanding that an educational environment fostering emotional development can significantly contribute to students' well-being and personal growth. This insight emphasizes the importance of educational policies prioritizing emotional intelligence and equipping students with effective emotional management tools. Furthermore, comprehending the intricate interplay between social support and emotion management underscores the potential for tailored interventions. Leveraging the influence of family, friends, and significant others could enhance students' emotional coping strategies.

However, it's essential to acknowledge the study's limitations. We focused on a specific university context and relied on self-reported data. Future research should encompass a more diverse participant pool and employ a longitudinal design to understand better the dynamic interrelationship between emotion management and perceived social support. This approach would provide a more comprehensive perspective on how these factors evolve over time and in various contexts.

CONCLUSION

Our study significantly contributes to the existing literature on students' emotional well-being by providing nuanced insights into the interplay between emotion management and social support. This enhanced understanding offers valuable prospects for refining educational strategies that empower students to adeptly navigate their emotional experiences, thereby fostering personal growth and holistic well-being.

The implications of our research hold particular significance within the context of Vietnam's Tertiary Education system, where students are expected to cultivate sound knowledge and appropriate attitudes to navigate market uncertainties effectively. Students at Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City exhibit a notable deficit in emotion management skills, underscoring the imperative for heightened awareness and the acquisition of social support.

Educators and administrators at Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City should prioritize creating constructive student group activities within the educational milieu to foster camaraderie and social connections. Additionally, particular attention should be given to female students, given their comparatively lower perception of social support and less frequent engagement in emotion management than their male counterparts. Addressing this gender disparity in social support could contribute to more balanced emotional well-being among students.

Educators and university administrators should implement targeted interventions for students pursuing engineering disciplines to bolster their emotion management skills. The demands of the engineering field, which require both technical knowledge and emotional competence, emphasize the need for concerted efforts in cultivating effective emotion management practices among these students.

In conclusion, our study illuminates the intricate dynamics between emotion management and social support, underscoring the pressing need for tailored interventions to enhance students' emotional well-being. By fostering a nurturing environment that promotes social connectivity and emotional resilience, Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City can empower its students to thrive in their academic pursuits and personal development. This proactive approach can contribute to students' university success, overall life satisfaction, and future accomplishments.

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