

## Research Article

# MENTAL HEALTH IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN VIETNAM

*Nguyen Duc Huu<sup>#</sup>*

Department of Psychiatry, Trade Union University, Ha Noi, Vietnam

## Abstract

**Introduction:** Depression, stress, anxiety have been leading to many negative consequences in the lives of many people, especially for students. These neurological diseases are quite common, manifest in varying degrees and in severe forms, most people with depression will often find a very negative treatment.

**Objective:** The article analyzes the current situation and factors affecting students' mental health. Recommendations are proposed as a selective intervention to minimize the negative impact on students during their studies

**Method:** The study was conducted with 200 students at 5 Vietnamese universities. The students are randomly selected from the first to the 4<sup>th</sup> academic year. Qualitative research methods are implemented as an additional tool for interpretation of research results.

**Results:** Regular interaction between lecturers and students, between students and students through social activities is a solution to reduce psychological trauma and mental health of students in universities in Vietnam. *ASEAN Journal of Psychiatry, Vol. 25 (8) October, 2024; 1-4.*

**Keywords:** Mental Health; Students; University; Social Interaction; Vietnam

## Introduction

There are many causes of school-age mental disorders, especially in big cities, such as: Academic pressure, especially during exam season; parents place too many expectations on their children; unhealthy life habits. This affects academic performance as well as health and when academic performance is not good, it creates greater pressure, leading to a pathological spiral of mental disorders. Experts said that most children with severe conditions are often due to a long history of psychological problems but do not receive timely intervention, support and recommendations, mental health assessment of students, especially post-traumatic stress disorders and anxiety disorders, is desperately needed. From there, families, schools and society need to come up with solutions to help students be more proactive and active in improving mental health. Mental health services for students need to be strengthened, especially in the post-COVID-19 period. In Vietnam, there have been a number of

scientific studies on mental health among students and the use of mental health services in this population, the results show that the rate of use of mental health services among students is quite low. However, studies still have some limitations such as results that may be skewed due to lack of data, or focus only on certain disciplines, not generalized. Therefore, more scientific studies are needed to provide more statistical data to promote the implementation of Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) intervention programs for students, raising awareness among young people about mental health in general and the prevalence of depressive disorders among young people [1,2].

## Materials and Methods

Data was collected from 215 University students stratified by gender and five surnames. Some of the data in this study was collected online (100 in-person and 115 online). The vote response rate was 96.4%. The mean stroke of the study subjects

was 19.30 (SD=0.69). Nearly 90% of participants were female (89.5%) and the majority were first-year students (79.6%) Depression Scale, Anxiety and Stress (DASS-21).

The DASS-21 scale has been translated into Vietnamese and adapted for validity, reliability and cut-out points on adult Vietnamese women and adolescents. The DASS-21 scale consists of 21 propositions, which measure the same three independent contents as the author suggests: Depression (7 propositions), anxiety (7 clauses) and stress (7 propositions). The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of DASS-21 in the adaptation study in Vietnam is 0.76-0.91 [3].

The scale is constructed according to Likert-4 and is rated a score from 0 to 3, with qualitative results transferred to the corresponding quantitative as follows: 0=this does not occur to me at all; 1=sometimes or in part happens to me; 2=often or repeatedly happens to me; 3=very often, or almost always happens to me. The overall score of DASS-21 is a plus of all 21 items and then doubled. Therefore, the overall DASS-21 score will range from 0 to 126. The score of each sub-scale will range from 0 to 42. In this study, Cronbach's Alpha of the DASS-21 scale was 0.67. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the depression, anxiety and stress subscale was: 0.74; 0.80; 0.75.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) developed by Castillo et al., is used to measure students' life satisfaction [3]. The scale consists of 5 clausesto assess the overall level of life satisfaction in general, built in the form of Likert 7. Each such item has 7 levels of choice with qualitative results transferred to the corresponding quantitative as follows: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree 3=partially disagree; 4=confused; 5=partial agreement; 6=agree; 7=totally agree. The maximum score of the scale is 30. The higher the score, the more satisfied with life. This scale has been used quite commonly in many population groups belonging to many different cultural groups of different ages and shows quite high reliability. The Vietnamese version has also been used extensively in studies in Vietnam. In this study, Cronbach's Alpha of this scale was 0.70 [3].

## Results

Satisfaction with the lives of University students. The results showed that the majority of university

students tended to be satisfied with life i.e. from "relatively satisfied" to "extremely satisfied" (139 students, 65.63%); in which, the proportion of "comparative" accounted for the highest proportion (81 students, accounting for 38%). Although this is a positive result from this study, this rate is still lower than the study of life satisfaction of students at other universities around the world.

For example, compared to the study on a group of 315 students of the University of Regina (Canada) using the same scale, the level of coaching ( $\geq 20$ ) was up to 76.2% (370) students in Chile also showed their level of coaching at 72.3% besides, the number of students who tend not to coach also accounts for a significant proportion, nearly 30% (Table 1) [3,4].

University life satisfaction under gender slice shows that there is no difference in life satisfaction between men and women. Multistage model analysis shows that women tend to be more satisfied with life than men when controlling for economic, educational and occupational factors. Some previous studies have shown similar results (Table 2).

An overview of the levels of stress, anxiety and depression disorders among college students is shown in Table 2. The results showed that the proportion of students with mild or higher levels of stress, anxiety and depression was 51.84%, respectively; 81.55% and 57.09%. In which, the proportion of students with signs from severe to very severe for stress disorders was 7.96%; anxiety disorders are 35.92% and depression is 8.55%. However, the prevalence of these high-risk manifestations is consistent with the results of a 2018 study in Vietnam on adolescents, using the same scale. The results also showed that the rates of stress, anxiety and stress were 54.7%, respectively; 56.1% and 37.9%.

The results of a study on depression among students in southern schools in Vietnam also showed that the rate of showing signs of depression was 41.1%. According to research by Harding et al., the majority of Vietnamese know very little information about mental health services [5]. In addition, students feel ashamed about using mental health care [6]. In Vietnam, the term mental health is understood to refer to serious mental disorders and people with mental disorders that can pose a danger to the community, so the definition itself is also discriminatory (Figure 1) [5].

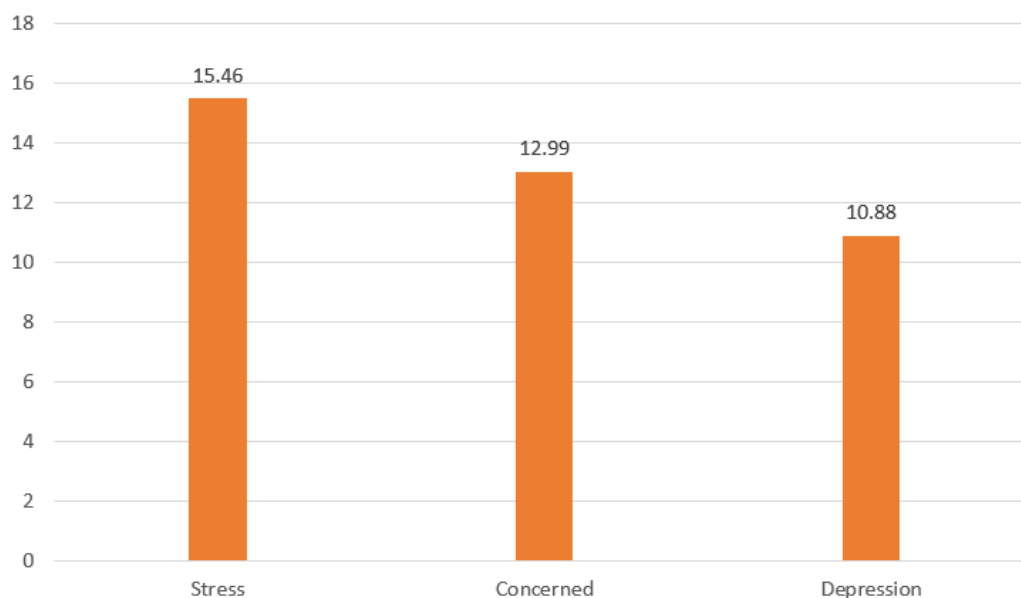
**Table 1. Life satisfaction of survey students.**

$\bar{X}$	SD	Min	Max	Frequency					
				0-19		20		$\geq 21$	
22,22	5.04	7	35	149	28.93%	28	5.44%	338	65.63%

**Note:** Min=Minimum score; Max=Maximum score;  $\bar{X}$  = Average score; SD= Standard deviation;  $1 \leq \bar{X} \leq 35$ .

**Table 2. Life satisfaction by gender.**

Satisfied with life	$\bar{X}$	DLC	t (515)	P
Male	22,13	5.79	-0.132	0.895
Female	22,23	4.95		


**Figure 1. Students' stress disorder, concerned and depression.**

According to research on the level of anxiety, depression, stress (measured by DASS-21) of students during the period of social distancing, online learning increased students' anxiety levels (up to 43.1%). In the same study, the DASS-18 scale also showed that the proportion of students with stress and depression levels was 37.3% and 50%, respectively. The above causes can lead to high rates of depression, anxiety and stress of students in this study [7,8].

### Conclusion

SRH greatly influences the life and learning of students. Therefore, it is very important to identify the influencing factors and causes leading to SRH of students. The study results show that most of the life satisfaction of the university is mainly concentrated at the coaching level (65.63%). However, this result shows that the satisfaction with life of university students in Vietnam is lower

than that of other universities in the world. The proportion of students with mild or higher levels of stress, anxiety and depression was 51.84%, respectively; 81.55% and 57.09%. In particular, the proportion of students with severe to very severe signs for stress disorders was 7.96%; anxiety disorders are 35.92% and depression is 8.55%. Although the mean values of depression, anxiety and stress were higher for female students than for male students, there was no statistically significant difference between the sexes in all three forms of stress, anxiety and depressive disorders. The findings highlight the need to develop prevention programmes to raise awareness of mental health issues as well as provide the necessary services to support students to treat mental health issues in universities in Vietnam today.

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**Corresponding author:** *Nguyen Duc Huu, Department of Psychiatry, Trade Union University, Ha Noi, Vietnam*

**E-mail:** *huund@dhcd.edu.vn*

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