

# Peer Pressure Among Junior High School Students In Thai Nguyen Province

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## Abstract

Peer pressure is a prevalent psycho-social phenomenon during adolescence that profoundly affects students' behavior, emotions, and academic performance. This study aims to investigate the current status of peer pressure among junior high school students in Thai Nguyen Province, clarifying its main manifestations and level of impact in the current school context. The study was conducted on 500 students at 05 junior high schools in Thai Nguyen Province (Nha Trang Secondary School, Tuc Duyen Secondary School, Hoang Van Thu Secondary School, Tan Long Secondary School, Chu Van An Secondary School). The main research methods included a questionnaire survey combined with interviews, and data were processed using descriptive statistics. The results show that peer pressure exists at a moderate to high level, most clearly manifested in academics, the need for recognition within the peer group, and self-comparison with friends. Based on these findings, the article proposes several measures for schools and teachers in the education of junior high school students to help them overcome this pressure.

**Keywords:** pressure, peer pressure, junior high school students, school psychology, peer relationship.

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## I. Introduction

The junior high school stage marks a crucial transition in students' psychological development, moving from childhood to adolescence. During this period, students tend to expand their social relationships, especially their relationships with peers. The peer group is not only a place for emotional sharing but also becomes a standard for students to compare, evaluate, and adjust their own behavior.

Peer pressure is understood as the direct or indirect influence of the peer group on an individual's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. This pressure can be positive, motivating students to strive, integrate, and develop; however, in many cases, peer pressure causes negative consequences such as psychological stress, anxiety, reduced self-confidence, deviant behavior, or academic decline.

In the current context, as social media and online communication become increasingly popular, peer pressure among junior high school students tends to escalate and become more complex. However, empirical studies on the status of peer pressure in junior high school students in Thai Nguyen Province remain limited. Stemming from this reality, this research was conducted to clarify the current status of peer pressure among junior high school students, thereby contributing to the proposal of appropriate educational measures.

## II. Research Methodology

**Theoretical Research Method:** Collect, analyze, synthesize, systemize, and generalize documents related to peer pressure in junior high school students.

**Written Survey Method:** Collect the opinions of 500 junior high school students in Thai Nguyen Province through a peer pressure survey questionnaire, which included groups of questions about:

- (1) Academic pressure (comparing scores, achievements);
- (2) Pressure in peer relationships (desire for acceptance, fear of isolation);
- (3) Pressure regarding self-image and behavior (clothing, manners, social media use).

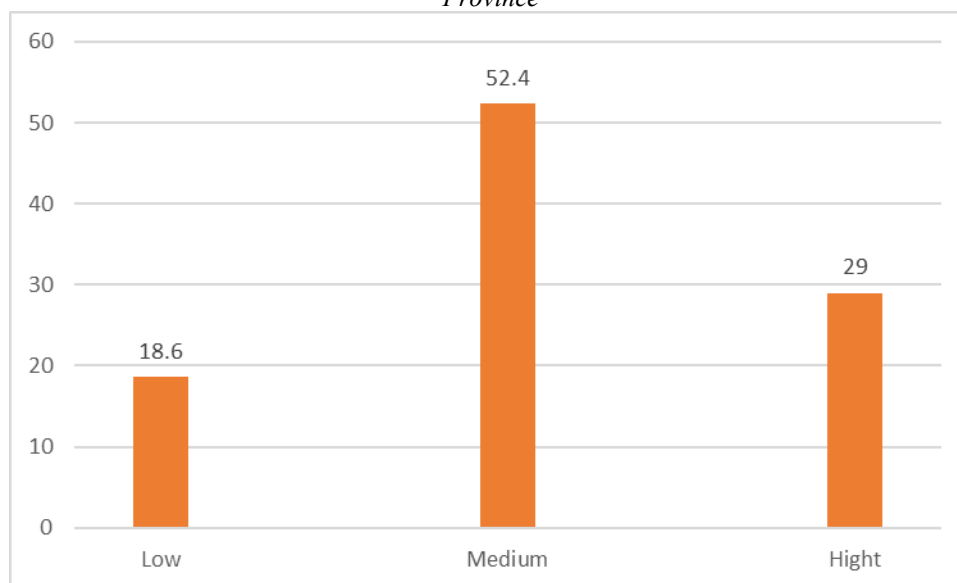
**In-depth Interview Method:** Select and conduct semi-structured interviews with some students and homeroom teachers to further clarify the quantitative results.

**Data Processing Method:** The collected data were processed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean value) with Microsoft Excel 2016 software to reflect the status and level of peer pressure in junior high school students.

### III. Research Results And Discussion

#### Current Status of Peer Pressure Levels among Junior High School Students in Thai Nguyen Province

Chart 3.1: Current Status of Peer Pressure Levels among Junior High School Students in Thai Nguyen Province



The results of the survey data analysis in Chart 3.1 from 500 students show that peer pressure is a common phenomenon in junior high schools. Based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = no pressure at all; 5 = very high pressure), the overall mean score for peer pressure reached (Mean = 3.62 SD = 0.67), indicating that peer pressure among junior high school students is at a relatively high level. Analyzing by level, 18.6% of students reported experiencing low peer pressure, 52.4% experienced moderate pressure, and 29.0% felt high and very high pressure.

This result indicates that nearly one-third of junior high school students in Thai Nguyen Province are under high and very high peer pressure, requiring timely attention and support.

#### Current Status of Peer Pressure Manifestations in Academics among Junior High School Students in Thai Nguyen Province

With a 5-point Likert scale convention: 1 = Completely disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Undecided; 4 = Agree; 5 = Completely agree, the survey of 500 students yielded the following results:

Table 3.2. Manifestations of Peer Pressure in Academics among Junior High School Students in Thai Nguyen Province

No.	Manifestation	%	Mean	SD
1	Frequently comparing my scores with friends in the class;	62.8	3.78	0.81
2	Feeling anxious when academic results are lower than friends	64.4	3.52	0.84
3	Admitting to studying hard mainly "to not be inferior to friends" rather than for personal interest.	47.6	3.34	0.78
	<b>Overall Mean</b>		<b>3.55</b>	<b>0.71</b>

The results in Table 3.2 show that academic peer pressure is clearly manifested in junior high school students (M = 3.55; SD = 0.71). The manifestation "frequently comparing my scores with friends in the class" has the highest mean score (M = 3.78; SD = 0.81), indicating that the behavior of comparing academic achievements is the most common source of pressure.

The manifestation "feeling anxious when academic results are lower than friends" scored a mean of (M = 3.52 ;SD = 0.84), reflecting a state of psychological stress associated with social comparison in the school environment. Meanwhile, the manifestation "studying hard mainly to not be inferior to friends" had a lower mean score (M = 3.34; SD = 0.88), yet it is still above the mid-point, showing that the academic motivation of a segment of students is significantly influenced by peer pressure rather than internal interest. This suggests that academic achievement is not only a requirement from the school and family but also a significant source of pressure stemming from the peer environment.

### Current Status of Peer Pressure Manifestations in Peer Relationships among Junior High School Students in Thai Nguyen Province

Table 3.3. Current Status of Peer Pressure Manifestations in Peer Relationships among Junior High School Students in Thai Nguyen Province

No.	Manifestation	%	Mean	SD
1	Fear of being negatively judged by friends or isolated from the group	58	3.62	0.79
2	Changing personal behavior or opinions to fit in with the peer group	45.2	3.34	0.81
3	Feeling sad or stressed when not allowed to participate in friends' common activities	32.6	3.21	0.86
	<b>Overall Mean</b>		<b>3.39</b>	<b>0.65</b>

The results in Table 3.3 show that pressure in peer relationships and the need for acceptance among junior high school students are at a moderate level ( $M = 3.39$ ;  $SD = 0.65$ ). The manifestation "fear of being negatively judged by friends or isolated from the group" has the highest mean score ( $M = 3.62$ ;  $SD = 0.79$ ), clearly reflecting the need to belong and be recognized within the peer group. The remaining manifestations have lower mean scores but are still above the mid-point, indicating that peer relationships are an important source of psychological impact on junior high school students.

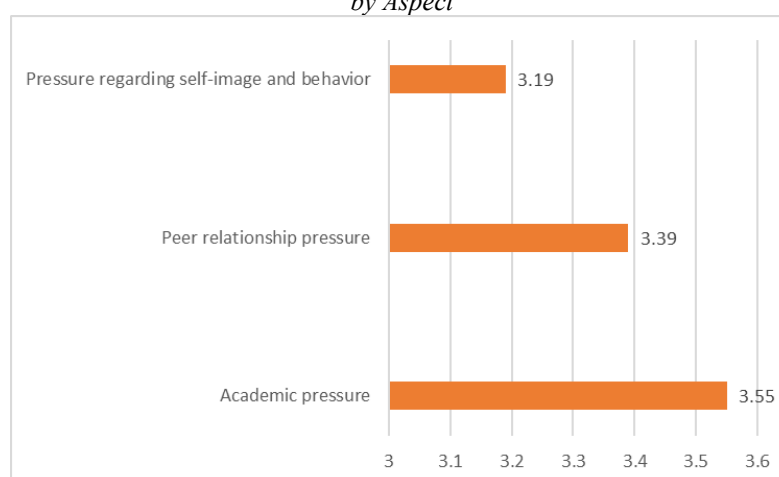
### Current Status of Peer Pressure Manifestations Regarding Self-Image and Behavior among Junior High School Students in Thai Nguyen Province

Table 3.4. Current Status of Peer Pressure Manifestations Regarding Self-Image and Behavior among Junior High School Students in Thai Nguyen Province

No.	Manifestation	%	Mean	SD
1	Feeling inferior when my appearance or style is different from friends	41.1	3.28	0.82
2	Being influenced by friends in the use of social media	38.8	3.19	0.79
3	Sometimes acting against personal wishes to "be more like friends"	27.2	3.10	0.86
	<b>Overall Mean</b>		<b>3.19</b>	<b>0.69</b>

The results in Table 3.4 show that pressure regarding self-image and behavior in junior high school students is at a moderate level ( $M = 3.19$ ;  $SD = 0.69$ ). The manifestation "feeling inferior when my appearance or style is different from friends" has the highest mean score ( $M = 3.28$ ;  $SD = 0.82$ ), reflecting students' sensitivity to social comparison regarding personal image. Although the mean score is lower compared to academic and peer relationship pressure, this group of manifestations is still at a noticeable level, indicating the growing influence of group norms and social media on the behavior and emotions of junior high school students.

Chart 3.4. Comparison of Peer Pressure Levels among Junior High School Students in Thai Nguyen Province by Aspect



The aggregated results from Chart 3.4 show that peer pressure among junior high school students in Thai Nguyen Province manifests differently across the three areas: academics, peer relationships, and self-image/behavior. Academic pressure has the highest mean score ( $M = 3.55$ ), followed by peer relationship pressure ( $M = 3.39$ ), and the lowest is pressure regarding self-image and behavior ( $M = 3.19$ ). This difference reflects the hierarchical structure of the sources of peer pressure in the current school context.

First, **academic pressure** holds the dominant position, suggesting that academic achievement is not only influenced by family and school expectations but also by frequent comparison with peers. The high mean score in this group reflects the reality that junior high school students tend to evaluate their self-worth through relative academic results in the class. This increases competitive forms of social comparison, making academics the most prominent source of psychological pressure.

Second, **pressure in peer relationships** and the need for acceptance stands at an intermediate position, indicating that peer relationships play a vital role in the psychological life of junior high school students. The fear of negative judgment, isolation, or the need to adjust behavior to fit in with the group reflects a strong need to belong and be recognized. Compared to academic pressure, this group of pressure is more distinctly socio-emotional, directly impacting students' psychological state and sense of social safety in the classroom environment.

Finally, **pressure regarding self-image and behavior** has the lowest mean score, yet it is still above the mid-point, suggesting that this is an emerging source of pressure, heavily influenced by group culture and social media. Although not yet outweighing academic and peer relationship pressures, pressure related to appearance, style, and behavior conforming to group norms indicates a growing trend for students to care about how they are perceived in the eyes of their friends. This is particularly noteworthy in the context of increasing digital media and social media use among junior high school students.

In summary, the research results show that peer pressure among junior high school students is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, where pressure groups do not exist in isolation but interact with each other. Academic pressure is performance-based and comparative, peer relationship pressure is socio-emotional, and self-image pressure reflects the formation of personal identity within the peer group. This necessitates that schools not only focus on reducing academic pressure but also prioritize building a positive peer relationship environment and educating students about personal values and respecting differences.

### Current Status of Factors Influencing Peer Pressure among Junior High School Students in Thai Nguyen Province

To understand the current status of factors influencing peer pressure among junior high school students in Thai Nguyen Province, we used a 5-point Likert scale: 1 = No influence at all; 2 = Little influence; 3 = Moderate influence; 4 = Influence; 5 = Very strong influence. The results obtained are as follows:

**Table 3.5. Current Status of Factors Influencing Peer Pressure among Junior High School Students in Thai Nguyen Province**

No.	Influencing Factors	%	Mean	SD
1	Comparison of academic achievement among students in the class	66.4	3.74	0.78
2	Desire to be accepted and recognized by friends	60.2	3.61	0.76
3	Influence from close friends/frequent peer groups	57.2	3.55	0.80
4	Pressure from social media and friends' images online	49.6	3.38	0.83
5	Family expectations combined with comparison with friends	52.8	3.46	0.79
6	Teachers' behavior and evaluation in front of the whole class	43.8	3.29	0.82
7	Individual psychological characteristics (inferiority, sensitivity, tendency to compare)	55.0	3.50	0.77
	<b>Overall Mean</b>		<b>3.50</b>	<b>0.69</b>

The aggregate results in Table 3.5 show that peer pressure among junior high school students in Thai Nguyen Province is the result of a multi-dimensional interaction among: the comparative learning environment, peer relationships and the need for recognition, the influence of family and social media, and students' individual psychological characteristics. Specifically:

**Comparison of academic achievement among students in the class** is the factor with the strongest influence on peer pressure ( $M = 3.74$ ;  $SD = 0.78$ ), with 66.4% of students stating this factor has a high level of influence. This reflects the reality that the junior high school environment in Thai Nguyen Province still heavily emphasizes performance comparison, where academic results become an important measure for students to evaluate themselves in relation to their peers.

The factor of **family expectations combined with comparison with friends** also has a significant level of influence ( $M = 3.46$ ). This shows that peer pressure is not only formed within the school setting but is also "amplified" by family expectations when parents compare their children with classmates or schoolmates.

Factors related to the **desire to be accepted and recognized by friends** ( $M = 3.61$ ) and the **influence from close friends** ( $M = 3.55$ ) both have high mean scores. This clearly reflects the psychological characteristics of junior high school age: students have a strong need to belong to a group and be recognized for their position within the peer collective. In this context, peer group norms become a significant source of influence, making

students easily adjust their behavior, attitude, or academic goals to fit in with the group, thereby increasing peer pressure.

The factor **pressure from social media and friends' images online** has a mean score of  $M = 3.38$ , lower than the academic and direct relationship groups but still at a noticeable level. This suggests that social media is gradually becoming an expanded space for peer pressure, where students are constantly exposed to images of friends' success, appearance, or lifestyle, thus increasing social comparison.

The factor of **teachers' behavior and evaluation in front of the whole class** has a lower mean score ( $M = 3.29$ ) but cannot be overlooked. Teachers comparing students in front of the class or unintentionally emphasizing differences in achievement can increase peer pressure.

In addition, students' **individual psychological characteristics** (inferiority, sensitivity, tendency to compare) have a relatively high mean score ( $M = 3.50$ ), showing that peer pressure is not solely due to external impacts but also depends on the psychological adaptability of each student.

The above results necessitate the need for synchronized intervention measures from the school – family – teachers – students themselves, instead of focusing on a single factor.

### **Measures to Help Junior High School Students in Thai Nguyen Province Overcome Peer Pressure**

The current status research results indicate that peer pressure among junior high school students in Thai Nguyen Province is primarily influenced by the comparison of academic achievement, the need for peer acceptance, the impact of social media, family expectations, and students' individual psychological characteristics. Based on this, the proposal of support measures needs a multi-layered, comprehensive approach linked to the local context, specifically:

#### ***a. Measures at the School Level: Building a School Environment that Reduces Comparison and Increases Support***

Research shows that the factor of academic achievement comparison is the greatest source of peer pressure for junior high school students. Therefore, schools need to adjust teaching organization and assessment methods to reduce negative competition and increase the encouragement of individual progress:

Limit the public comparison of scores among students in front of the class; instead, emphasize the progress of each individual over time.

Diversify assessment formats (process assessment, feedback-based assessment, portfolio assessment), helping students realize that success is not solely measured by scores.

Develop experiential activities, clubs, and group activities to create opportunities for students to showcase diverse abilities beyond pure academics.

These measures contribute to reducing achievement pressure and creating a psychologically safe school environment.

#### ***b. Measures for Homeroom Teachers: Enhancing the Role of Socio-Psychological Support***

Homeroom teachers play a key role in identifying and timely intervening in manifestations of peer pressure among students. Given that the need for peer acceptance and group influence strongly impacts junior high school students, teachers need to focus on building a positive classroom atmosphere:

Organize class activities and group discussions on communication skills, respecting differences, and coping with peer pressure.

Observe and early detect students showing signs of low self-esteem, isolation, or excessive dependence on the peer group.

Avoid public forms of comment or comparison that can unintentionally increase peer pressure.

#### ***c. Measures at the Family Level: Adjusting Expectations and Accompanying Children***

The study shows that family expectations combined with comparison with friends is a factor that increases peer pressure. Therefore, the family needs to act as a psychological anchor, rather than becoming an additional source of pressure. Families need to:

Avoid comparing their children with classmates or siblings.

Listen, share, and empathize with the psychological difficulties their children encounter in peer relationships.

Encourage children to develop according to their individual abilities and interests, instead of chasing common peer group norms.

***d. Measures to Develop Individual Skills for Students: Increasing Self-Regulation and Self-Awareness Capabilities***

Research results indicate that individual psychological characteristics (inferiority, sensitivity, tendency to compare) significantly influence the level of peer pressure. Therefore, equipping students with psycho-social skills is extremely necessary:

Educate self-awareness skills, helping students understand their strengths, weaknesses, and personal values.

Practice refusal skills and independent decision-making skills in the face of peer group pressure.

Guide students on how to manage emotions and cope with stress and failure in academics as well as in peer relationships.

***e. Measures to Guide Safe and Positive Social Media Use***

Pressure from social media, although not the strongest influencing factor, is on the rise. Therefore, measures are needed to educate students to use social media selectively and healthily. Schools and families need to:

Guide students to recognize the "selective and performative" nature of images on social media, avoiding negative self-comparison.

Encourage students to use social media for learning purposes, positive connection, and self-development.

Strengthen education on digital safety skills and civilized behavior in cyberspace.

Based on the current status research results, it can be affirmed that supporting junior high school students in Thai Nguyen Province to overcome peer pressure requires a multi-dimensional intervention approach, combining efforts from the school, teachers, family, and the students themselves. The measures aim not only to minimize the negative impact of peer pressure but also to transform pressure into positive developmental motivation, contributing to building a safe, friendly, and supportive school environment for the comprehensive development of students.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The study confirms that peer pressure is a common psycho-social phenomenon in junior high school students, influenced by many interwoven factors from the school environment, family, and individual characteristics. This pressure significantly affects students' academics, peer relationships, and psychological development. Correctly identifying the current status and influencing factors is a crucial basis for proposing appropriate support measures. The research contributes practical evidence for educational work, school psychological counseling, and building a safe, friendly learning environment for junior high school students in the current context.

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