

Psychology Counseling For Pupils Of Secondary Schools In Thai Nguyen City, Thai Nguyen Province

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Abstract

The secondary school student is an age group with many complex changes. They have to face many pressures from school, family, friends and psychological changes. If they are not supported promptly, these issues can negatively affect students' mental health and academic performance. School psychological counseling is one of the important activities that helps middle school students reduce stress, develop social skills and improve emotional management ability. In addition, this activity also helps detect early psychological problems such as anxiety and depression, thereby providing appropriate intervention measures. School psychological counseling contributes to creating a healthy learning environment where students feel listened to and supported, which will contribute to improving educational effectiveness and helping secondary school students develop comprehensively.

Keywords: Counseling; Psychology; Secondary School Students; Support; Mental Health

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I. Introduction

The development of science and technology, along with the increasingly complex changes of society, has had a significant impact on all aspects of human life, especially secondary school students. They may encounter psychological difficulties in the areas of learning, career orientation, emotions, behavior, relationships with teachers, family, friends, and even relationships on social networking platforms.

In recent years, school psychological counseling at secondary schools in Thai Nguyen city, Thai Nguyen province has provided counseling and psychological support for students in many forms, but the results have not been as expected. One of the reasons for this situation is that schools do not have school psychologists who have received formal training in providing psychological counseling to students. Counseling activities are mainly undertaken by part-time teachers, so they lack expertise, and their practical skills and experience in handling complex psychological situations are limited. Although the facilities for counseling activities have been built, they are still formal. Therefore, psychological counseling activities for students have not achieved optimal results.

II. Material And Methods

Theoretical research method: Collecting, analyzing, synthesizing, systematizing, and generalizing relevant documents related to school psychological counseling activities to establish the theoretical foundation for the research topic.

Investigation method: Collecting opinions from 950 students in grades 6 to 9 currently studying at secondary schools in Thai Nguyen City, Thai Nguyen Province through questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews to clarify the current state of psychological counseling activities for students in these schools. Specifically, the study aims to examine the level of psychological difficulties faced by secondary school students, the content of psychological counseling, counseling methods and formats, and the factors influencing psychological counseling activities for students.

Interview method: Selecting and interviewing a number of teachers and students to collect and explore more detailed information about the school's psychological counseling activities.

Data processing method: After the research subjects complete the survey questionnaires, the collected forms are gathered and reviewed to determine their validity. Then, the data is entered into Microsoft Excel 2016 for statistical analysis of the responses. Finally, formulas are applied to calculate the average score and percentage ratios.

Conventional Point Scale for Levels: Very frequent, very influential, very difficult: (5 points); Frequent, influential, difficult (4 points); Occasional, partially influential, moderately difficult (3 points); Rare, slightly influential, slightly difficult (2 points); Never, not influential, not difficult (1 point).

Point range for Different Levels:

Very frequent, very influential, very difficult: 4.21 - 5.00

Frequent, influential, difficult: 3.41 - 4.20

Occasional, partially influential, moderately difficult: 2.61 - 3.40

Rare, slightly influential, slightly difficult: 1.81 - 2.60

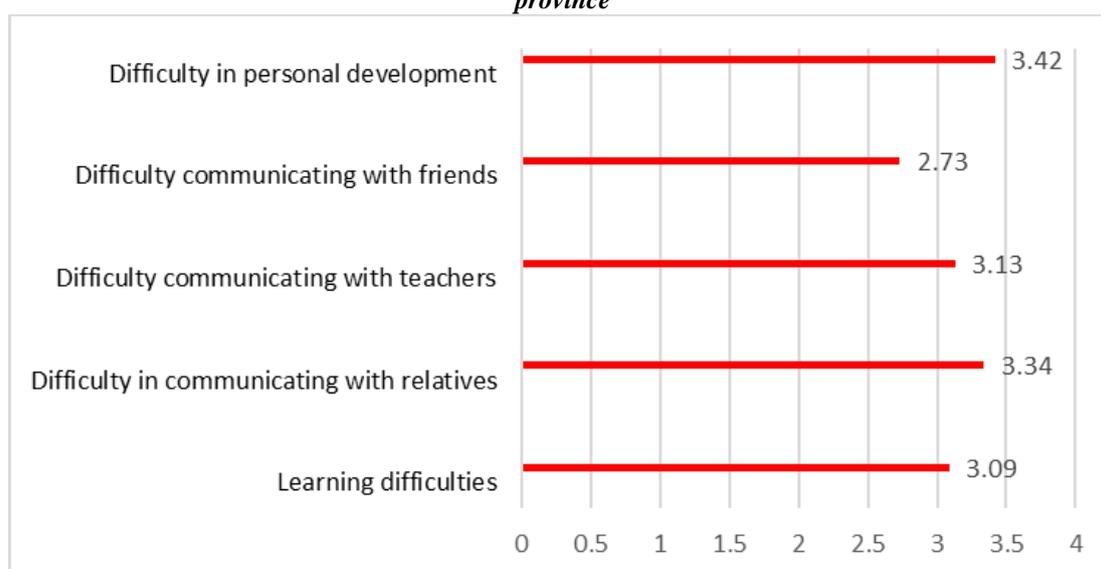
Never, not influential, not difficult: 1.00 - 1.80

III. Result

The reality of psychological difficulties of secondary schools pupils in Thai Nguyen city, Thai Nguyen province

The psychological difficulties of secondary school students manifest in various aspects of both academics and personal life. There are three main categories of challenges that students commonly face: academic difficulties, communication and interpersonal challenges, and personal development struggles. The findings are as follows:

Chart 3.1. Level of psychological difficulties of secondary school students in Thai Nguyen city, Thai Nguyen province



The results from chart 3.1 indicate that students at secondary schools in Thai Nguyen City, Thai Nguyen Province face psychological difficulties at a high level across various areas, with mean ranging from 2.73 to 3.42. Among these, the area where middle school students experience the greatest difficulty is personal development, with mean is 3.42. This is followed by communication with family members (Mean: 3.34). Ranked third in terms of difficulty level is communication with teachers (Mean: 3.13). Academic challenges are in fourth place (Mean: 3.09). Lastly, communication with peers is assessed as the least difficult area (Mean: 2.73).

Secondary school students face significant challenges in personal development as they transition from childhood to adulthood, experiencing profound psychological, physiological, and cognitive changes. Their strong need for self-affirmation, coupled with limited experience and confidence, often leads to internal conflicts and difficulties in shaping personal values.

Communication with parents and teachers is another major obstacle due to generational differences in perspectives. While students seek the freedom to express themselves, they frequently feel misunderstood, resulting in conflicts and communication gaps.

Academic pressures further complicate their development, as students must adapt to new learning methods and manage their time effectively. Without adequate support, they may struggle with motivation and feel overwhelmed.

In contrast, peer communication presents fewer difficulties, as students tend to relate closely to their friends, seeking empathy and connection. Although conflicts may arise, they generally find it easier to share and understand one another compared to interactions with adults.

Current status of implementing psychological counseling content for students in secondary schools in Thai Nguyen city, Thai Nguyen province

Table 3.1. Current status of implementing psychological counseling content for students in secondary schools in Thai Nguyen city, Thai Nguyen province

No	Consultation contents	Mean
1	Counseling students on learning difficulties	3.51
2	Counseling students on career orientation	3.40
3	Counseling students on difficulties in relationships with friends	3.38
4	Counseling students on difficulties in relationships with parents	1.91
5	Counseling students on difficulties in relationships with teachers	1.94
6	Counseling students on communication and behavior issues with the opposite sex	2.98
7	Counseling students on self-development skills	2.75
8	Counseling on conflicts on the internet with everyone	1.50
9	Counseling students on gender and sexual issues	2.42
10	Counseling and supporting students who are victims of school violence	2.90
11	Counseling and supporting parents on psychological characteristics of students	3.08
Average		2.76

Table 3.1 indicates that the psychological counseling activities for students have been implemented in schools at a moderate level, with an average score of 2.76. However, there is a significant variation in the extent of implementation for specific counseling topics.

The most frequently provided counseling services include: Academic difficulties counseling (Mean: 3.51); Career orientation counseling (Mean: 3.4); Counseling for students facing difficulties in friendships (Mean: 3.38);

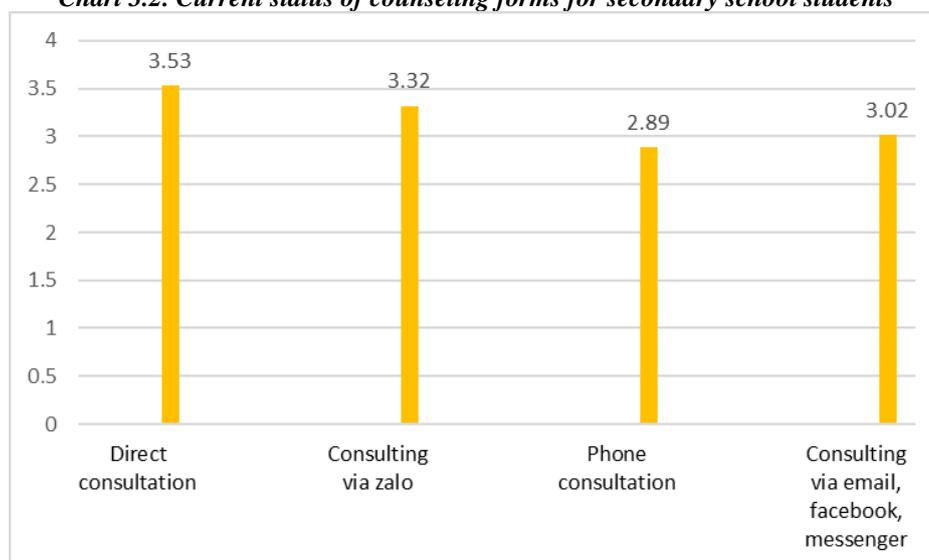
Meanwhile, the less frequently conducted counseling topics include: Counseling on conflicts on the internet (Mean: 1.5); Counseling for students facing difficulties in relationships with parents (Mean: 1.91); Counseling for students struggling in relationships with teachers (Mean: 1.94).

Looking at the results, it is evident that there are gaps in the implementation of psychological counseling activities in schools. Topics with a high level of difficulty, such as communication with parents and teachers (Table 2.1), are not frequently addressed. This inevitably results in these challenges receiving little to no support.

Moreover, in the current digital era, online conflicts have become a pressing issue, yet counseling on this topic is still rarely implemented.

Current status of psychological counseling for students in secondary schools in Thai Nguyen city, Thai Nguyen province

Chart 3.2. Current status of counseling forms for secondary school students



The results from chart 3.2 indicate that psychological counseling activities in secondary schools in Thai Nguyen City, Thai Nguyen Province are carried out through various forms. The two most frequently used counseling methods are direct consultation (Mean: 3.53) and consultation via Zalo (Mean: 3.32). Following these are consultation via email, Facebook, and Messenger (Mean: 3.02). Phone consultations are used less frequently, with an average score of 2.89.

Secondary school students most commonly choose direct consultation and consultation via Zalo because direct consultation makes them feel more comfortable, allowing them to express their emotions easily and receive immediate support from experts. Face-to-face interactions also foster trust and stronger connections.

Zalo is also a preferred counseling platform since it is widely used, easy to access, low-cost, and highly secure. Students can send messages or make calls without worrying about others discovering the content of their conversations.

Phone calls are often perceived as a more formal communication method, which can create pressure for students when speaking directly without the convenience of messaging support. Meanwhile, although Facebook is popular, its public nature raises concerns about privacy and potential judgment from friends or family members.

Current status of psychological counseling methods for students in secondary schools in Thai Nguyen city, Thai Nguyen province

Table 3.2: Current status of psychological counseling methods for junior high school students in Thai Nguyen city, Thai Nguyen province

No	Consultation methods	Mean
1	Observation method	3.61
2	Psychological testing method	1.0
3	Activity product analysis method	1.09
4	Student profile research method	2.55
5	Conversation method	3.61
6	Visual method (Images, videos,...)	2.75
7	Storytelling method	2.75
8	Persuasive method	2.98

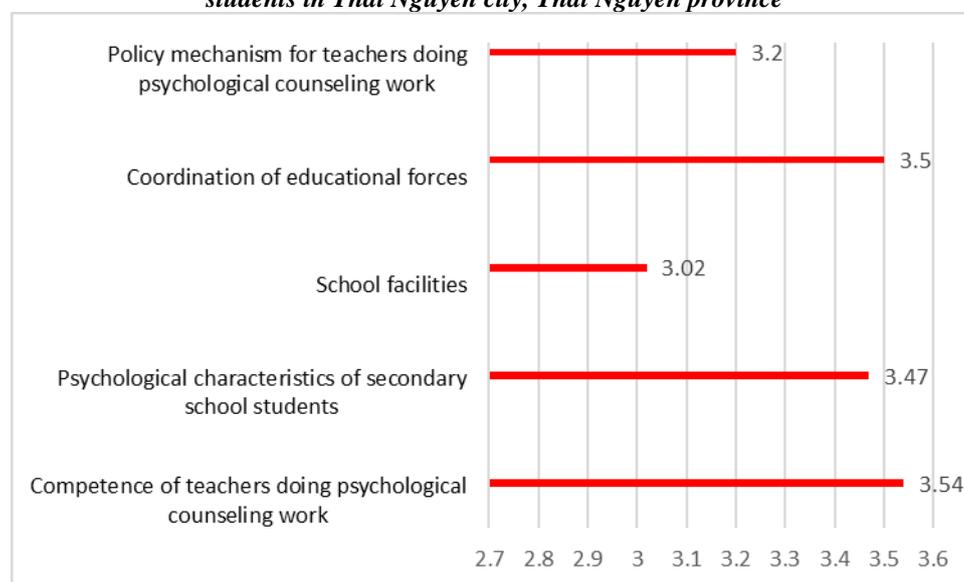
It can be observed that teachers use various methods in psychological counseling for students. However, the frequency of each method differs significantly. The most commonly used method is Observation and Conversation (Mean: 3.61), while the least frequently used method is psychological testing.

This result is understandable since administering psychological tests requires specialized training. Most teachers are not professionally trained in clinical psychology or counseling, making them feel insufficiently knowledgeable to conduct tests accurately. Additionally, some schools lack the necessary standardized psychological tests or supporting tools, which makes it difficult to implement this method effectively.

As a result, instead of relying on psychological testing, teachers often use direct conversations to listen and understand students, as this approach fosters stronger connections and better interaction.

Current status of factors affecting psychological counseling activities for students in secondary schools in Thai Nguyen city, Thai Nguyen province

Chart 3.3: Current status of factors affecting psychological counseling activities for secondary school students in Thai Nguyen city, Thai Nguyen province



The psychological counseling activities for students in secondary schools in Thai Nguyen City, Thai Nguyen Province are influenced by both subjective and objective factors. Among these, the most significant factor is the competency of teachers responsible for psychological counseling (Mean: 3.54), followed by students' reluctance to express their emotions (Mean: 3.47).

Additionally, the cooperation among educational forces is also considered a strongly influential factor in psychological counseling activities for students (Mean: 3.5), as it directly determines the process of identifying students' psychological difficulties and selecting appropriate support methods.

Measures to improve the effectiveness of psychological counseling activities for students in secondary schools in Thai Nguyen city, Thai Nguyen province

To enhance the effectiveness of psychological counseling for secondary school students in Thai Nguyen City, Thai Nguyen Province, a comprehensive approach with the following measures is required:

Training and improving counseling skills for teachers: In the absence of dedicated psychological counseling staff, schools should organize training courses on adolescent psychology, listening skills, and student support methods to strengthen the capabilities of teachers involved in counseling.

Building a friendly and open school environment: Schools should foster a truly open and positive cultural environment where students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts without fear of judgment. A supportive atmosphere enables students to access psychological assistance more easily.

Strengthening collaboration between schools, families, and psychological experts: Schools should establish mechanisms for cooperation among teachers, parents, and specialists to ensure comprehensive support for students, allowing for timely and effective intervention in psychological issues.

Enhancing the use of technology in psychological counseling: Schools should leverage digital tools for student counseling, such as online platforms, mobile applications, and psychology forums, providing students with convenient and secure access to counseling services.

Integrating life skills education into the curriculum: Psychological difficulties often stem from students' lack of soft skills. To prevent and help students cope with psychological challenges, schools should introduce lessons on emotional management, stress coping strategies, and effective communication, enabling students to proactively address their mental health concerns.

Enhancing communication about the importance of psychological counseling to raise awareness among teachers, parents, and students regarding its value, encouraging them to actively participate and seek support when needed.

IV. Conclusion

Psychological counseling for middle school students in Thai Nguyen City, Thai Nguyen Province plays a crucial role in helping them overcome psychological challenges, fostering comprehensive development in cognition, emotions, and life skills. Research findings indicate that despite significant progress in implementing school psychological counseling, several challenges still need to be addressed, such as improving teacher competency, strengthening collaboration between schools and families, and enhancing the support system for students' mental health.

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