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# Longitudinal Analysis of Social Support and Emotional Control Among Engineering Students in Vietnam”

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## Abstract

Within the setting of Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City, this research explores the complex link between students' perceptions of social support and their involvement in emotion regulation. This study uses a quantitative technique to reveal complex patterns and relationships by drawing data from 675 individuals in a thorough survey. The results show that there is a complex pattern to how students regulate their emotions; students who identify as male show more involvement and mostly use techniques that focus on self-support and emotional awareness. Importantly, individuals' reported levels of social support were moderate on the whole, with friends being the most common source. The effect of educational settings is highlighted by differences in the level of involvement in emotion regulation, especially among engineering students. Students' emotional coping mechanisms are shaped by their families and significant others, as the research shows that there is a positive association between perceived social support and the frequency of participating in behavior control measures. In light of these findings, it is clear that educational environments need individualized treatments to help students develop stronger social support networks and better control their emotions. Finally, this study highlights the need for strategies that strengthen social support systems and emotion management skills in educational settings, and it contributes to students' holistic development by emphasizing the significance of fostering an environment that supports students' emotional well-being alongside their academic pursuits.

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

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## INTRODUCTION

Following occurrences at school that brought attention to students' lack of emotional management skills, the Vietnamese education system has lately placed more emphasis on students' emotional health [1]. Although there have been attempts to provide realistic methods for controlling one's emotions, there is still a lack of knowledge on the significance of social support. According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, people's physical and mental development are influenced by the ever-changing interactions between themselves and their surroundings [2, 3]. Students' ability to regulate their emotions in both home and school settings is significantly impacted by the presence of social support, according to this theoretical paradigm. Continuing from this point, study conducted by Kitahara et al. (2020) on Japanese children shows that there is a two-way street between social support and emotional regulation, which in turn leads to better adjustment to school [4]. Similarly, the high incidence of depression among Vietnamese students is emphasized by Ho and Nguyen's (2021) research, which emphasizes the need of social support and the interdependence of emotion regulation [5]. Collectively, these research highlight how social support plays a significant role in molding college students' emotional landscapes. But you have to remember toIt should be mentioned that while these studies provide helpful information, there is a lack of research that specifically addresses the complex relationship between managing emotions and social support in the Vietnamese setting. It is important to incorporate cultural nuances while examining emotion management and social support dynamics in Asian educational settings, as shown by research by Zheng et al. (2021). This highlights the significance of taking cultural subtleties into account in such studies [6]. Lopez-Zafra (2019) also conducted research. has investigated the effects on students' mental health and found that it improves when they are able to control their emotions and have good social support systems [7].



Existing research often overlooks the complex interplay between social support and emotion control, instead seeing them as independent factors influencing more general psychological qualities [8–10]. To fill this knowledge gap, our study aims to examine the dynamic relationship between these two factors within the Vietnamese educational context, specifically looking at how they interact and impact students at Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City. To fill this knowledge gap, our study will focus on two important areas: (i) how social support affects students' emotional management in engineering programs, and (ii) how students perceive the level of social support among Vietnamese university students. Theoretically, the research is based on social support as proposed by Shumaker and Brownell (1984), which involves exchanging resources to improve well-being [11].

For reliable cross-cultural evaluation of perceived social support, researchers use the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) developed by Zimet et al. (1988) [12]. There are two schools of thought on the subject of emotion management: the functional and the individual skill-based. Consistent with the breadth of the research, the all-encompassing paradigm of Eisenberg et al. (2000) includes responses to environmental cues and the control of facial displays of emotion [13]. The ability to initiate, maintain, suppress, modify, and adjust emotional behaviors—which include visible facial expressions, gestures, and physiological responses—is a key component of effective emotion regulation. The research uses a Vietnamese-adapted version of the emotion management skills scale developed by Berking et al. (2014) [14] to assess

these abilities.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### *Sample Collection*

Based on the advice of Watson (2001), which is suitable for populations between 50,000 and 100,000, the study's sample size was chosen [15]. Following these criteria, 675 college students were included, with 426 girls (68.4% of the total) and 213 men (31.6%). Students' years of study were as follows: 52.0% were in their second year, 21.9% were in their first, 16.0% were in their third, and 9.0% were in their last.

### *Measurements*

The 12-item MSPSS was designed to measure how much support individuals felt from their family, friends, and other noteworthy persons [12]. The responses were gathered using a Likert scale that goes from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Higher total scores indicated more social support, whereas lower scores indicated less support. It was determined that the level of support for the interpretation might be either low (1-2.9), moderate (3-5), or high (5.1–7). To evaluate participants' abilities in this area in the Vietnamese setting, Berking et al. (2014) created the emotion management skills scale [14]. Answers were recorded on a Likert scale (0 to 4), showing the frequency of skill application within a week. The survey consisted of 27 questions over 9 variables. For the sake of uniformity, this scale was modified for use in Vietnam.

### *Data Analysis*

To get a better understanding of how often people use their emotion management abilities, we calculated mean scores for each component and a composite score. More frequent application of these abilities was indicated by higher mean scores. The results were shown as averages with their respective standard deviations. A significance threshold of  $p < 0.05$  was used to compute p-values in order to ascertain statistical significance. Numerous statistical tests were used, such as one-variable regression analysis with adjusted R-squared, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), t-tests, analysis of variance (ANOVA), correlation analysis, evaluation of Cronbach's Alpha, and assessment of EFA. The analyses were carried out with the help of SPSS Version 26.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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

The evaluation of emotional regulation abilities in our 675-student sample showed recognizable Cronbach's Alpha indices for each



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component, as shown in Table 1. Here were the indices: Feelings awareness (0.706), bodily perception (0.704), clarity (0.720), understanding (0.745), acceptance (0.701), tolerance (0.718), endurance (0.723), readiness to confront undesirable emotions (0.723), self-support (0.713), and modification (0.728) are all aspects of emotional intelligence. The validity of our evaluation instrument is shown by this extensive investigation. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index = 0.847 and statistical significance of Bartlett's test = 0.000 both showed that the dataset was suitable for EFA. Plus, the total variation explained by the retrieved components was 66.76%, which is higher than the 50% indicated. Each of the nine discovered features was robust, with factor loadings ranging from 0.629 to 0.855.

**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
<b>Emotion management</b>	<b>2.7348</b>	<b>.46481</b>	<b>2.8176</b>	<b>2.6966</b>	<b>.002**</b>	<b>3.164</b>

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	2.5467	2.6138	2.5758	2.4876	2.3172	2.4794	2.6759	2.120	.088	USSH>HCMUS (p=0.008)



emotions	.78809	.77923	.75909	.82935	.93783	.74018	.63781			UEL>HCMUS (p=0.009)
Self – Support	2.9842	3.1336	3.0000	2.8831	2.7796	2.8315	3.0000	3.705	.004	USSH>UIT (p=0.003)
	.80270	.69416	.78664	.84984	1.00625	.88352	.70099			USSH>HCMUS (p=0.002)
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)
Emotion management	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)
								6.590	.000	HCMIU>HCMUS (p=0.005)
	.46481	.43103	.43000	.47281	.59257	.45601	.38780			UEL>UIT (p=0.026)
										UEL>HCMUS (p=0.000)
										UEL>HCMUT (p=0.029)

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
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.3986</b>	<b>.77697</b>	<b>2.4683</b>	<b>2.3665</b>	<b>.114</b>	<b>1.584</b>

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.

### 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' 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.

**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**
<b>Total</b>	<b>.325**</b>	<b>.354**</b>	<b>.372**</b>	<b>.362**</b>	<b>.303**</b>	<b>.321**</b>	<b>.376**</b>	<b>.268**</b>	<b>.389**</b>	<b>.572**</b>

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 <sup>2</sup> )	Friends (R <sup>2</sup> )	Significant Other (R <sup>2</sup> )	Social Support (R <sup>2</sup> )
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***
<b>Emotion Management</b>	<b>.177***</b>	<b>.112***</b>	<b>.239***</b>	<b>.326***</b>

Note: \*\*\*: p < 0.001

The findings showed that how students felt about their social support system affected how they dealt with their emotions (Table 7). Emotion management practices were shown to be 32.6% more variable after controlling for the effect of perceived social support. Importantly, different aspects of social support were correlated with different aspects of emotion control to differing degrees. After close friends (11.2%) and family (17.7%), significant others (23.9%) had the greatest influence. When it came to managing their emotions, students' perceptions of social support influenced whether they used modification tactics (15%) or tried to explain their thoughts (13.7%).

The results shed light on the complex interplay between students' ability to control their emotions and their perceptions of social support at Vietnam National University in Ho Chi Minh City. Compared to female students, male students engage in certain emotion control characteristics more often. Looking more closely, we can see that students pay careful attention to their emotions, have a solid grasp of what they are, and demonstrate admirable self-support in their efforts to regulate their emotions. Students' emotional development and coping mechanisms are impacted by these characteristics, as these data demonstrate.



More research is needed to fully understand the relationship between how people feel about their social support system and how they deal with their emotions. Investigating the processes or theoretical frameworks that clarify the impact of social support on students' efficient emotion regulation is an intriguing avenue for future study. Importantly, our findings emphasize the major role of family and

influence on students' methods of handling difficult emotional circumstances, suggesting that they play a crucial role in molding students' emotional experiences. There is a lack of research that specifically looks at how students' perceived social support in the setting of higher education relates to how often they control their emotions. Our research helps close this knowledge gap by shedding light on the relevance of this link.

In terms of practical applications, our research supports the idea that kids' health, happiness, and development may benefit greatly from a classroom setting that prioritizes emotional learning. This realization highlights the need for educational systems that place a premium on emotional intelligence and provide students with practical strategies for managing their emotions. Understanding the complex relationship between social support and emotion control also highlights the possibility of individualized treatments. Improved emotional coping mechanisms among kids may result from drawing on the support of loved ones.

Nevertheless, it is critical to recognize the constraints of the research. We utilized self-reported data and zeroed down on a particular academic setting. To get a better understanding of the dynamic interplay between emotion control and perceived social support, future studies should use a longitudinal design and include a more varied group of participants. This method would provide additional light on the dynamic nature of these elements across different settings and epochs.

## CONCLUSION

By offering detailed insights into the interaction between emotion regulation and social support, our research considerably adds to the current body of literature on students' emotional health. With this newfound knowledge, we can better tailor our teaching methods to help students develop the skills they need to manage their emotions, which is essential for their overall health and happiness.

In the context of Vietnam's Tertiary Education system, our study has important implications since students are required to have good knowledge and attitudes to handle market risks. It is clear that students at Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City need to be more self-aware and find ways to connect with others since they have a serious problem controlling their emotions.

Ho Chi Minh City's faculty and administration should make it a top priority to provide opportunities for students to form positive groups inside the university's learning environment in order to encourage students to get to know one another. Because female students participate in emotion regulation less often and have a weaker feeling of social support, they too require special care. Students' mental health might be improved if we tackle the gender gap in social assistance.

College and university leaders should help students majoring in engineering learn to control their emotions by implementing specific interventions. It is crucial to work together to help these students develop effective strategies for managing their emotions, since the engineering profession needs both technical expertise and emotional intelligence.

Finally, our research highlights the critical need for individualised treatments to improve students' emotional health by shedding light on the complex interplay between social support and emotion regulation. Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City can help its students succeed academically and personally by creating a supportive community that encourages them to interact with others and be resilient emotionally. Students' happiness, success in college, and future achievements may all benefit from this proactive approach.

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