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The Impact of Social Support on the Academic Performance of Vietnamese University Students

Abstract. This study examined the association between perceived social support and academic performance among university students in Vietnam. Guided by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, we conceptualized support from family, friends, and significant others as proximal resources that may reduce psychological strain and facilitate academic functioning. A convenience sample of 152 students completed an online survey comprising the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support and the Academic Performance Questionnaire. Internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, and the hypothesis was tested using Pearson correlation and simple linear regression in SPSS 26. Perceived social support was positively associated with academic performance Descriptive results further indicated that family was the most salient source of perceived support. These findings underscore the relevance of proximal support systems to students' academic functioning in Vietnam and suggest that universities may benefit from strengthening mentoring, peer-support, and family-engagement initiatives. Because the cross-sectional convenience sample was predominantly female and first-year, future longitudinal studies should test the direction and generalizability of these associations.

Keywords: social support, academic performance, students, family culture, higher education, Vietnam

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Влияние социальной поддержки на академическую успеваемость студентов университетов Вьетнама

Аннотация. В данном исследовании изучается связь между воспринимаемой социальной поддержкой и успеваемостью студентов университетов Вьетнама. Опираясь на теорию экологических систем Бронфенбреннера, авторы оценили

поддержку со стороны семьи, друзей и значимых лиц как ресурсы ближайшего окружения, способные снизить психологическое напряжение и способствовать успешной учебной деятельности. Выборка, сформированная методом доступности, включала 152 студента, прошедших онлайн-опрос с использованием «Многомерной шкалы воспринимаемой социальной поддержки» и «Опросника успеваемости». Внутренняя согласованность данных оценивалась с помощью коэффициента альфа Кронбаха, а проверка гипотезы осуществлялась методами корреляционного анализа Пирсона и простой линейной регрессии в программе SPSS 26. Была выявлена положительная связь между воспринимаемой социальной поддержкой и успеваемостью. Из описательных результатов также следует, что семья является наиболее значимым источником воспринимаемой поддержки. Полученные данные подчеркивают важность систем поддержки ближайшего окружения для учебной деятельности студентов во Вьетнаме и указывают на то, что университетам может быть полезно развивать инициативы в области наставничества, взаимной поддержки студентов и вовлечения семей в образовательный процесс. Поскольку данное одномоментное исследование проводилось на выборке, сформированной методом доступности и состоящей преимущественно из студентов женского пола и первокурсников, в будущих исследованиях продолжительных периодов необходимо проверить направление выявленных связей и возможность их обобщения.

Ключевые слова: психологическая социальная поддержка, успеваемость, студенты университетов, поддержка семьи, высшее образование, Вьетнам.

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Introduction

Academic performance is consequential for students' development and for Vietnam's efforts to cultivate a highly skilled workforce. It is not solely a function of individual ability, however, but also reflects the personal and contextual resources available to students. Academic performance encompasses the attainment of educational goals, including the acquisition and application of knowledge and the development of skills required to function effectively in academic settings [Kuh et al. 2006]. Accordingly, it extends beyond examination scores to include outcomes such as critical thinking, problem-solving ability, and preparation for postgraduation challenges [York et al. 2015].

Among the contextual resources relevant to academic performance, perceived social support may help students manage academic demands, sustain motivation, and remain engaged with their studies. Social support refers broadly to the emotional, informational, instrumental, and interpersonal assistance perceived as available from family members, friends, educators, and other members of one's community [Rayle, Chung 2007; Wilcox et al. 2005].

Supportive relationships may enrich students' educational experiences and protect them against psychological difficulties [Hefner, Eisenberg 2009; Liu et al. 2019; Wang et al. 2018], whereas material and institutional support may reduce financial and practical barriers to educational participation [Castleman, Long 2016; Kondakci et al. 2018]. Together, these resources may facilitate students' personal adjustment and academic functioning. Consistent with this account, perceived social support has been positively associated with academic achievement and engagement across student populations [Achdiyah et al. 2023; DeBerard et al. 2004; Mulyadi, Saraswati 2020; Wen, Li 2022]. For example, Mulyadi and Saraswati (2020) found that social support was positively associated with academic engagement and accounted for 9.2 % of its variance. Although this cross-sectional evidence does not establish causality, it suggests that students who perceive greater support may participate more actively in academic activities.

Several processes may underlie this association. Emotional support from family members and friends may help students maintain confidence and academic motivation [Anjani et al. 2024]. Parental academic support has also been linked to students' academic well-being through greater academic resilience [Fathi et al. 2024]. In addition, support from lecturers and peers may facilitate access to information, feedback, and collaborative learning opportunities [Kondratavičienė et al. 2023], while buffering stress in educational settings [Hoferichter et al. 2024]. Students who perceive greater support also tend to report less anxiety and stress [Anjani et al. 2024; Hoferichter et al. 2024; Salter et al. 2025]. Reduced psychological strain may, in turn, enable students to devote greater attention and effort to examinations, assignments, and other academic tasks. The availability, perception, and use of social support are embedded within broader cultural and social contexts. This issue is particularly relevant in Vietnam, where family connectedness and communal obligations are strongly valued [Le 2023].

Research in related populations has further emphasized the importance of family and community resources for individual functioning. However, the extent to which students receive and utilize social support depends on various factors, including cultural and social influences. Thus, social support holds particular significance in the Vietnamese context, where familial and communal values are deeply ingrained [Amin et al. 2024; Tung et al. 2024]. Nevertheless, evidence regarding the association between perceived social support and academic performance among Vietnamese university students remains limited.

Direct examination of this relationship is therefore needed to determine whether findings from other cultural and educational settings extend to the Vietnamese context. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory provides a useful framework for understanding this relationship [Bronfenbrenner 1986]. The theory situates human development within a set of nested and interacting environmental systems. Students' recurring interactions with family members, peers, and educators occur within the

microsystem and may provide emotional, informational, and practical resources relevant to academic functioning. Connections among these immediate settings—for example, interactions between families and universities-form part of the mesosystem. Broader cultural values, institutional structures, and educational policies operate at more distal levels. From this perspective, academic performance is shaped partly by the quality of support within students' immediate environments and the coordination of resources across those environments. Examining this proposition in Vietnam offers both theoretical and practical value.

Theoretically, it extends an ecological account of academic functioning to a cultural context in which family relationships may be particularly salient. Practically, identifying relevant sources of support may inform university mentoring programs, peer-learning communities, psychological services, and family-engagement initiatives. Such strategies may strengthen students' academic functioning while helping them manage the psychological demands of university life. Accordingly, the present study examined the relationship between perceived social support and academic performance among university students in Vietnam. We hypothesized that perceived social support would be positively associated with academic performance.

Materials and Methods

This research employs a quantitative research methodology utilizing the following scales:

- Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) developed by Zimet et al. [1988];
- Academic Performance Questionnaire developed by Birchmeier et al. [2015].

Perceived social support was assessed using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support [MSPSS; Zimet et al. 1988]. The scale comprises 12 items assessing three sources of support: family, friends, and a significant other, with four items representing each subscale. Participants rated each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 'very strongly disagree' to 4 'very strongly agree'. Sample items include "I get the emotional help and support I need from my family". Previous research has supported the reliability and validity of the Vietnamese version among university students [Ho et al. 2020]. In the present study, Internal consistency was high for both perceived social support ($\alpha = .90$).

Academic performance was measured with the Academic Performance Questionnaire [Birchmeier et al. 2015]. We used the Academic Performance Questionnaire developed by Birchmeier et al. [2015] and adapted into Vietnamese by Tín [2023]. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with the item scores summed to produce an overall academic-performance score. Total scores are interpreted using five performance levels: excellent (33—40), good (25—32), moderate (17—24), poor (9—16), and failing (0—8). In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha was 0.86.

The authors collected data online via Google Forms from October 10, 2024, to November 11, 2024, to describe the characteristics of the subjects and variables within the research hypothesis. Participants were eligible if they were university students and

users of information and communication technology platforms. To recruit participants, the researcher first contacted university representatives to request their assistance. With their support, online meetings with students were organized via Google form. In addition, the researcher explained the study, shared the survey link, and invited students to participate voluntarily. Data was collected online through Google Forms between October 10 and November 11, 2024. The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki [World Medical Association 1964].

The analysis process included assessing scale reliability using Cronbach's Alpha and conducting linear regression analysis to examine relationships between variables (Table 1). The analysis was performed using SPSS version 26.0, ensuring scientific rigor and accuracy in data processing. The analyses proceeded in three stages. First, the reliability and validity of the study measures were evaluated. Second, descriptive statistics such as mean, standardization person correlation were calculated for all study variables. Finally, simple linear regression analysis was performed to examine whether perceived social support significantly predicted academic performance.

Table 1. **Reliability of the results obtained**

Measurement parameters	M	SD	Reliability assessment (Cronbach's alpha method)
Social support	61.66	14.14	0.90
Academic performance	27.43	5.25	0.86

Note: **M** ± **SD**: Mean ± Standard Deviation

Participants were recruited using nonprobability convenience sampling from universities in Vietnam. The final sample comprised 152 students (M age = 19.16 years, SD = 1.33) who participated voluntarily. The sample included 32 men (21.1 %) and 120 women (78.9 %). Most participants were first-year students (n = 106, 69.7 %); six (3.9 %) were in their second year, 22 (14.5 %) in their third year, 17 (11.2 %) in their fourth year, and one (0.7 %) beyond the fourth year. Regarding religion, 41 participants identified as Buddhist (27.0 %), 22 as Catholic (14.5 %), one as Protestant (0.7 %), one as Caodaist (0.7 %), and 87 reported no religious affiliation (57.2 %). Half lived in rural areas (n = 76, 50.0 %), 73 lived in urban areas (48.0 %), and three lived in mountainous, midland, or island regions (2.0 %). Most participants were single (n = 116, 76.3 %); 34 were in a relationship (22.4 %), and two were married (1.3 %). Academic fields included natural sciences or engineering (n = 4, 2.6 %), social sciences, humanities, or education (n = 103, 67.8 %), culture, arts, or sports (n = 4, 2.6 %), and other fields (n = 41, 27.0 %; Table 2).

According to the reliability analysis, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the Social Support scale (0.90) and the Academic Performance scale (0.86) exceeded the threshold of 0.70, indicating high reliability for both scales. This confirms that the scales employed in this research possess stable and dependable measurement capacity.

Furthermore, the authors calculated the mean and standard deviation values for the Social Support scale (M=61.66, SD=14.14) and the Academic Performance scale (M=27.43, SD=5.25). These findings provide a solid foundation for further analysis of the relationships under investigation (Table 3).

Table 2. **Sample characteristics**

Demographic variables		N
Age	24 22 21 20 19 18	2 (1.3 %) 4(2.6 %) 16 (10.5 %) 22 (14.5 %) 8 (5.3 %) 100 (65.8 %)
Gender	Male Female	32 (21.1 %) 120 (78.9 %)
Academic Year	Year 1 Year 2 Year 3 Year 4 Other	106(69.7 %) 6(3.9 %) 22 (14.5 %) 17 (11.2 %) 1 (0.7 %)
Religious belief	Buddhism Catholicism Protestantism Caodaism None	41(27.0 %) 22(14.5 %) 1 (0.7 %) 1 (0.7 %) 87(57.2 %)
Place of residence	Rural Urban Midlands/mountains/islands	76 (50.0 %) 73(48.0 %) 3 (2.0 %)
Marital status	**Marital status** Single In a relationship Married	116 (76.3 %) 34 (22.4 %) 2 ± 1.3 %
Field of Study	Science/engineering Social sciences/humanities/education Culture/arts/sports Other	4 ± 2.6 % 103 ± 67.8 % 4 ± 2.6 % 41 ± 27.0 %

Table 3. **The results of the investigated relationships**

General information of the sample	CNT ± PCT	M ± SD
Age (years old) 24 23 22 21 20 19 18	 2 ± 1.3 % 0 ± 0.0 % 4 ± 2.6 % 16 ± 10.5 % 22 ± 14.5 % 8 ± 5.3 % 100 ± 65.8 %	19.16 ± 1.33
Gender Male Female	 32 ± 21.1 % 120 ± 78.9 %	0.79 ± 0.41

The end of the table 3

General information of the sample	CNT ± PCT	M ± SD
Academic Year		1.69 ± 1.12
Year 1	106 ± 69.7 %	
Year 2	6 ± 3.9 %	
Year 3	22 ± 14.5 %	
Year 4	17 ± 11.2 %	
Other	1 ± 0.7 %	
Religious belief		3.47 ± 1.82
Buddhism	41 ± 27.0 %	
Catholicism	22 ± 14.5 %	
Protestantism	1 ± 0.7 %	
Caodaism	1 ± 0.7 %	
None	87 ± 57.2 %	
Place of residence		1.52 ± 0.54
Rural	76 ± 50.0 %	
Urban	73 ± 48.0 %	
Midlands/mountains/islands	3 ± 2.0 %	
Marital status		1.25 ± 0.46
Single	116 ± 76.3 %	
In a relationship	34 ± 22.4 %	
Married	2 ± 1.3 %	
Scientific field of activity		2.54 ± 0.92
Science/engineering	4 ± 2.6 %	
Social sciences/humanities/	103 ± 67.8 %	
education	4 ± 2.6 %	
Culture/arts/sports	41 ± 27.0 %	
Other		

Note: **CNT ± PCT:** Count (CNT) and Percentage (PCT); **M ± SD:** Mean (M) ± Standard Deviation (SD).

This research employed a non-probability convenience sampling method across universities in Vietnam. A total of 152 subjects participated voluntarily, with a mean age of 19.16 (M = 19.16, SD = 1.33).

Of all the participants, 32 subjects were male (21.1 %) and 120 were female (78.9 %). In terms of the academic year, there were 106 first-year students (69.7 %), six second-year students (3.9 %), 22 third-year students (14.5 %), 17 fourth-year students (11.2 %), and one student beyond the fourth year (0.7 %).

Regarding religious beliefs, 41 students identified as Buddhist (27.0 %), 22 as Catholic (14.5 %), one as Protestant (0.7 %), one as Caodaist (0.7 %), and 87 reported no religious affiliation (57.2 %). In terms of residence, 76 students lived in rural areas (50.0 %), 73 in urban areas (48.0 %), and three in mountainous, midland, or island regions (2.0 %).

Regarding marital status, 116 students were single (76.3 %), 34 were in a relationship (22.4 %), and two were married (1.3 %). In terms of academic disciplines,

four students belonged to natural sciences or engineering (2.6 %), 103 to social sciences, humanities, or education (67.8 %), 4 to culture, arts, or sports (2.6 %), and 41 to other fields (27.0 %) (Table 2).

Results

The results of the Student Social Support Survey using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support Scale (MSPSS) are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. **Assessing social support among students using the MSPSS**

Questionnaire questions 1 partie	M	N	Level							R
	SD	%	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
There is a special person who is around when I am in need	5.16	N	10	8	5	33	0	60	36	7
	1.79	%	6.6	5.3	3.3	21.7	0	39.5	23.7	
There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows	5.18	N	7	8	7	34	0	64	32	6
	1.69	%	4.6	5.3	4.6	22.4	0	42.1	21.1	
My family really helps me	6.03	N	2	3	5	16	17	18	91	1
	1.44	%	1.3	2.0	3.3	10.5	11.2	11.8	59.9	
Emotional help and support from your family	5.41	N	7	7	4	21	28	29	56	2
	1.71	%	4.6	4.6	2.6	13.8	18.4	19.1	36.8	
There is someone in my social circle who is a real source of comfort to me	5.23	N	10	10	2	30	0	61	39	4
	1.81	%	6.6	6.6	1.3	19.7	0	40.1	25.7	
My friends are helping me	5.13	N	5	7	11	34	0	74	21	8
	1.58	%	3.3	4.6	7.2	22.4	0	48.7	13.8	
When something goes wrong, I can rely on my friends	4.83	N	7	9	12	44	0	63	17	10
	1.65	%	4.6	5.9	7.9	28.9	0	41.4	11.2	
My family knows about my problems	4.89	N	9	12	12	37	0	48	34	9
	1.85	%	5.9	7.9	7.9	24.3	0	31.6	22.4	
Any problems that arise, I inform my family	5.22	N	6	5	12	31	0	69	29	5
	1.62	%	3.9	3.3	7.9	20.4	0	45.4	19.1	
There is a special person in my life who cares about my feeling	4.76	N	19	6	9	35	0	56	27	11
	1.97	%	12.5	3.9	5.9	23.0	0	36.8	17.8	

The end of the table 4

Questionnaire questions 1 partie	M	N	Level							R
	SD	%	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
My family helps me make decisions	5.23	N	7	5	12	30	0	60	38	3
	1.70	%	4.6	3.3	7.9	19.7	0	39.5	25.0	
I can talk about my problems with my friends	4.57	N	11	12	16	41	0	57	15	12
	1.78	%	7.2	7.9	10.5	27.0	0	37.5	9.9	

Note: **M ± SD**: Mean ± Standard Deviation, **N**: Sample size **R**: ranked as follows: 1 — Absolutely disagree, 2 — Disagree, 3 — Mostly disagree, 4 — neutral, 5 — Mostly agree, 6 — Agree, and 7 — Absolutely agree.

The research utilizes the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support developed by Zimet et al. [1988], translated and comprehensively validated within the Vietnamese context by Trà and Cường [2024].

Descriptive analysis revealed the following six items with the highest mean scores:

- "My family really tries to help me" (M = 6.03, SD = 1.44);
- "My family knows about my problems" (M = 5.41, SD = 1.71);
- "My family is willing to help me make decisions" (M = 5.23, SD = 1.70);
- "There is someone in my social circle who is a real source of comfort to me" (M = = 5.23, SD = 1.81);
- "Any problems that arise, I inform my family" (M = 5.22, SD = 1.62);
- "There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows" (M = = 5.18, SD = 1.69).

Conversely, the following six items registered the lowest mean scores:

- "There is a special person who is around when I am in need" (M = 5.16, SD = = 1.79);
- "My friends really try to help me" (M = 5.13, SD = 1.58);
- "My family knows about my problems" (M = 4.89, SD = 1.85);
- "When something goes wrong, I can rely on my friends" (M = 4.83, SD = 1.65);
- "There is a special person in my life who cares about my feeling" (M = 4.76, SD = = 1.97);
- "My family knows about my problems" (M = 4.57, SD = 1.78).

The descriptive statistics indicate that family constitutes the primary source of support, as evidenced by the highest mean scores for items pertaining to familial aid and assistance (Table 5). This underscores the central role of family within Vietnamese culture, where familial support is deemed a critical foundation enabling students to navigate stress. In contrast, items relating to friendships and other personal connections register lower mean scores, suggesting a circumscribed support depth in social relationships existing independently of the family unit. These insights suggest that bolstering external relational depth enhances academic robustness while diversifying and sharing support network benefits, which otherwise may rely significantly upon kinship ties.

Table 5. **Assessing social support among students using the MSPSS**

Questionnaire questions 2 partie	M	N	Level					R
	SD	%	1	2	3	4	5	
The subject preparation is good	3.45	N	6	5	75	46	20	3
	0.91	%	3.9	3.3	49.3	30.3	13.2	
Attentive when talking	3.59	N	3	10	55	62	22	2
	0.89	%	2.0	6.6	36.2	40.8	14.5	
It's better when I have good grades in subjects	4.22	N	1	4	20	63	64	1
	0.82	%	0.7	2.6	13.2	41.4	42.1	
An active participant in discussions	3.43	N	3	12	75	41	21	4
	0.90	%	2.0	7.9	49.3	27.0	13.8	
After the appointment, I immediately start working on documents and projects	3.30	N	7	19	62	50	14	5
	0.96	%	4.6	12.5	40.8	32.9	9.2	
Homework and sports activities help improve your skills in each subject	3.14	N	8	22	73	38	11	7
	0.94	%	5.3	14.5	48.0	25.0	7.2	
You have to put in more effort to complete difficult tasks	3.18	N	9	21	65	48	9	6
	0.95	%	5.9	13.8	42.8	31.6	5.9	
Problem solving is a useful hobby for me	3.12	N	12	26	57	45	12	8
	1.04	%	7.9	17.1	37.5	29.6	7.9	

Note: **M ± SD**: Mean ± Standard Deviation; **N**: Sample Size; **R:** ranked as follows: 1 — Strongly disagree, 2 — Disagree, 3 — Neutral, 4 — Agree, and 5 — Strongly agree.

This research employs the Academic Performance Questionnaire, developed by Birchmeier et al. [2015] and translated and adapted by Tin [2023], to assess the academic performance of university students.

Descriptive analysis reveals the following four highest-scoring items:

- "The subject preparation is good" (M = 4.22, SD = 0.82);
- "An active participant in discussions" (M = 3.59, SD = 0.89);
- "It's better when I have good grades in subjects" (M = 3.45, SD = 0.91);
- "An active participant in discussions" (M = 3.43, SD = 0.90).

Conversely, the four lowest-scoring items are as follows:

- "Projects and documents to be completed" (M = 3.30, SD = 0.96);
- "You have to put in more effort to complete difficult tasks" (M = 3.18, SD = = 0.95);
- "Homework and sports activities help improve your skills in each subject" (M = = 3.14, SD = 0.94);
- "Solving problems is a useful hobby for me" (M = 3.12, SD = 1.04).

The descriptive statistics of the Academic Performance Questionnaire indicate that students tend to focus on clear and specific objectives, such as attaining high grades and engaging dynamically in scholastic activities. The top-scoring metrics affirm pupils'

preference for outcomes-focused learning augmented with meticulous preliminary task engagement. In contrast, the lowest average scores, related to proactively initiating assigned tasks, persevering through adversity, and recognizing resolution methodologies as intrinsically meaningful, highlight inconsistencies in study dynamics. These findings suggest that students tend to focus more on immediate, short-term instructional goals, potentially indicating an underdeveloped ability to maintain long-term academic consistency and a proactive approach to problem-solving within this educational context. The correlation between students' social support and academic performance is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. **The results of the correlation between students' social support and academic performance**

The variable under study	Social support	Academic performance
Social support	1	0.46**
Academic performance	0.46**	1

Note: **p< 0.01.

Analyzing the interrelationship between variables reveals a positive correlation between social support and academic performance ($r = 0.46$, $p < 0.01$; Table 5). This statistically significant correlation demonstrates that as the level of social support increases, academic performance tends to improve correspondingly. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. **The result of the analysis using the regression model**

Income → Outcome	R^2	F(df)	β	SE	t	95 %CI	
						Lower	Upper
SS → AP	0.46	39.91 (1)	0.26***	0.04	6.32	0.18	0.33

Note: ***p<0.001, Social Support (SS), Academic Performance (AP).

R^2: Coefficient of Determination; **F(df)**: F-statistic; β: Standardized Regression Coefficient; **SE**: Standard Error; **t**: t-value; **95 % CI Lower**: Lower bound of the 95 % Confidence Interval; **95 % CI Upper** → Upper bound of the 95 % Confidence Interval.

Thus, regression analysis indicates that social support significantly and positively impacts the academic performance of university students. The determination coefficient ($R^2 = 0.46$) demonstrates that social support explains 46 % of students' academic performance variance.

Furthermore, the standardized regression coefficient, $\beta = 0.26$, with a t-statistic of 6.32, reaches a high level of significance ($p < 0.001$). This suggests that for every unit increase in social support, student academic performance tends to increase by 26 %. The 95 % confidence interval of the standardized regression coefficient, ranging from [0.18, 0.33], reinforces the reliability of the findings.

Thus, the research findings confirm the hypothesis that social support positively influences students' academic performance. Furthermore, the regression results highlight the beneficial role of social support in enhancing academic achievement,

emphasizing its significance as a key factor — a "stepping stone" — for students striving for better outcomes. These findings provide empirical evidence that reinforces existing national and international studies on the correlation between social support and academic performance while introducing new perspectives on student support in higher education.

Discussion

The present study found a moderate positive association between perceived social support and academic performance among Vietnamese university students. This result is consistent with evidence linking supportive relationships to students' adjustment and persistence [Holahan et al. 1995; Oswald, Suss 1994]. It also accords with ecological systems theory, which emphasizes the developmental relevance of recurring interactions within immediate social settings [Bronfenbrenner 1986].

The findings extend this literature by documenting the association in a Vietnamese university sample. From an ecological perspective, support from family members, peers, and educators may provide emotional reassurance, information, and practical assistance that help students respond to academic demands. The present data support an association at the level of overall perceived support, although they do not identify the causal mechanisms through which that association operates.

Family-related MSPSS items received the highest descriptive ratings, a pattern that is compatible with the salience of family connectedness in Vietnam [Murafa, Hoang 2023; Murafa et al. 2022]. Cross-national research has documented variation in norms concerning dependence on and separation from family [Luetzelberger 2014]. Nevertheless, the current item-level comparisons should be interpreted cautiously because the study did not formally compare family, friend, and significant-other subscales as predictors. Perceived social support accounted for approximately 21 % of the variance in academic performance. This effect was statistically reliable but also leaves substantial variance unexplained, indicating that academic performance reflects many additional personal, interpersonal, and institutional influences.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the use of nonprobability convenience sampling resulted in a relatively small and demographically unbalanced sample, with women (78.9 %), first-year students (69.7 %), and students in the social sciences, humanities, and education (67.8 %) being overrepresented. Furthermore, participants were recruited from a limited range of universities and academic disciplines. Consequently, the findings may not be generalizable to the broader population of university students in Vietnam, particularly men, students in later years of study, and those enrolled in science, technology, engineering, or other technical disciplines. Second, the cross-sectional design precludes conclusions regarding temporal precedence or causality. Although perceived social support was positively associated with academic performance and accounted for approximately 21 % of the variance in academic performance ($R^2 = .21$), the direction of this association cannot be determined. Social support may contribute to better academic performance, stronger academic performance may enhance students'

perceptions of social support, or unmeasured variables may influence both constructs. Third, both perceived social support and academic performance were assessed using self-report questionnaires, which may have introduced common method variance and social desirability bias and, consequently, inflated the observed association. Moreover, academic performance was assessed on the basis of students' self-perceptions rather than objective indicators, such as official grade point averages or examination scores. Finally, the analysis relied on an overall perceived social support score and did not examine the unique contributions of support from family, friends, and significant others. Future research should recruit larger and more demographically and academically diverse probability-based samples from different regions of Vietnam, employ longitudinal or experimental designs, and combine self-report measures with official academic records and data obtained from multiple sources. Future studies should also examine source-specific forms of social support, including institutional support, and potential mediators and moderators, such as academic stress, resilience, gender, and institutional support.

Conclusion

Perceived social support was moderately and positively associated with academic performance among university students in Vietnam. Key findings indicate that support from family, friends, and lecturers reduces psychological stress, increases learning motivation, and enhances academic performance, especially for specific and short-term learning goals and tasks. Family-related support items received the highest descriptive ratings, underscoring the salience of family relationships in this sample. Notably, family is identified as a crucial source of social support within the Vietnamese cultural context, playing an important role in promoting reassurance and emotional support for students. The regression model explained approximately 21 % of the variance in academic performance. The data were cross-sectional, this result should be interpreted as an association rather than a causal effect.

Universities may consider strengthening mentoring, peer-support, psychological-service, and family-engagement initiatives. Future studies should evaluate these strategies directly and examine whether the observed association generalizes across regions, academic years, and demographic groups in Vietnam.

Based on these findings, the authors recommend that universities develop mentoring programs, psychological support services, and learning communities to enhance social support while encouraging parents to support their children in their studies. Additionally, it is necessary to develop comprehensive policies to reduce academic pressure, provide financial assistance, and promote connectedness within the academic environment. To broaden the understanding of the relationship between social support and academic performance, future research should expand the scope of research participants across different regions in Vietnam while analyzing mediating or moderating factors (e.g., gender, personality, or institutional support policies) to provide a comprehensive view and optimize solutions for enhancing students' academic performance within the Vietnamese cultural context.

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