

The Relationship Among Peer Attachment, Self-Esteem and Psychological Well-being of University Students

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Abstract

University students' psychological well-being becomes a social concern in Vietnam, due to high stress from family, school, peer pressure. However, previous studies in Vietnamese context discussed distress, anxiety and stress with limited resources about student life satisfaction or well-being (Thang et al., 2022). From attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) and sociometer theory (Leary, 2004), it was anticipated that attachment style, self-esteem predicted psychological outcomes including well-being. Therefore, this study investigated the possible relationship among three variables of well-being, peer attachment, and self-esteem among Vietnamese university students. Participants were 187 university students aged 18 upward from a University in Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam. Students are in English Department, Hanoi University. These students are mixed in genders and classes. They took part in an online survey with closed questions selected from robust questionnaires in psychological test resources. The Adolescent Friendship Attachment Scale (AFAS), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) and Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWS) were selected to constitute the survey for their reliability and appropriateness in administering. The results shows that there was a significant correlation between secure peer attachment styles and well-being, and between self-esteem and well-being. Anxious peer attachment style was moderately and negatively correlated with self-esteem. Therefore, it is important for future researchers to study the elements constructing the well-being of students. It is also interesting to study the mediating role of peer attachment and gender differences influences on the quality of student well-being in a larger scale.

Keywords: Attachment Style, Peer Attachment, Psychological Well-being, Self-Esteem

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Introduction

University students' psychological well-being definition was established to refer specifically to the student's wellness in psychological, emotional, academic, social and spiritual realms (Adams et al., 2010). It is not astonishing that several studies investigated the factors to identify and improve the level of well-being (Bradburn, 1969; Leary, 2004; Ruff, 1989). Among those, self-esteem is considered a direct indicator. Self-esteem is defined as a person's positive or negative subjective evaluation of the personal value as a whole to be successful and valuable (Goldsmith, 1986; Orth & Robin, 2014; Rosenberg, 1965). However, available literature profoundly discussed the interaction between self-esteem and academic results (Booth & Gerard, 2011; Moss & St-Laurent, 2001); meanwhile, the connection between self-esteem and well-being of adolescents has not been fully articulated.

The attachment theory was first presented by Bowlby (1969). Bowlby (1969, 1997) proposed that the early attachment with the caregiver would have an impact on emotional and societal development in the future. Similarly, it would influence the quality of relationship ones maintain; and subsequently, their well-being. Different attachment styles were classified as secure attachment style and two insecure attachment styles including anxious (ambivalent) attachment style, and avoidant attachment style (Ainsworth, 1978; Aviezer et al., 2002). Given the fulfillment in need of emotional support from the initial caregiver, secure individuals grow in autonomy and are confident to explore the world outside, also they enjoy closeness comfortably (Ainsworth, 1978; Aviezer et al., 2002). On the other hand, insecure attachment prohibits active discovering in new conditions due to an extant mindset from particular memories (Ainsworth, 1978). The anxious (ambivalent) individuals tend to be afraid of rejection or abandonment for not feeling they deserve love (Ainsworth, 1978; Aviezer et al., 2002). They have low in self-evaluation and are negative about their values so in close relationships, they depend extremely on other's acceptance (Levy et al., 2011). Last but not least, avoidant attachment style is demonstrated in a self-directed way presenting a strong self-reliance and a dismissive attitude towards close relationships (Ainsworth, 1978; Aviezer et al., 2002). They dislike intimacy experienced jealous feeling in a relationship (Hazan & Shaver, 2009). By the turn of the 21st century, Wilkinson and Walford (2001) extended the theory to peer attachment that refer to peers as influential sources of social and emotional support among adolescents. This highlighted the role of peers in the critical developmental stage of adolescence. In recent studies, it was indicated that the secure attachment style predicted positively the well-being outcomes, the insecure attachment styles are indicators of lower well-being status (Aviezer et al., 2002; Ein-Dor et al., 2011; Karreman & Vingerhoets, 2012; Parr et al., 2020; Pietromonaco et al., 2000; Wei et al., 2011).

Although attachment is closely related to the upbringing and development of children, it received little media attention and institutional support in Vietnam. According to UNICEF Vietnam (2018), the adolescent mental health problem record in Vietnam increased at an alarming rate causing subsequent outcomes including substance abuse (2018), suicide thoughts (Nguyen et al., 2013). Given the increase in the number of mental health problems, adolescence well-being has become a growing concern in Vietnam. However, previous studies in Vietnamese context discussed distress, anxiety and stress with limited resources about student life satisfaction or well-being (Thang et al., 2022). Additionally, peer attachment was much less concerned than familial relationship in measuring well-being (Karreman & Vingerhoets, 2012). Also, it was apparent that research on peer attachment, adolescent, and university student's well-being was scarce.

During adolescence, friends play an critical role in social communication and become a source for social and emotional support (Wilkinson et al., 2015). In the period of adolescence, the mutual time between parents and adolescents decreases significantly, while the time with peers increases (Gorrese & Ruggieri, 2012) so peer attachment is important to discuss when adolescents establish relationships with other people apart from their familial bonds (He et al., 2018). Additionally, self-esteem was synthesised as the consequence of one relating themselves with another in association with the contextual setting to decide on positive or negative evaluations (Fleming & Courtney, 1984) which was align with the attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1997). Consequently, attachment provides the initial mechanism to understand how a person to relate to others in regulating emotions and behaviors in a social context. Comprehension of the connection of attachment and self-esteem prompts both theoretical and practical application in promoting self-evaluation and improve mental health condition for people.

Different Attachment Styles and Psychological Well-being

He et al. (2018) studied the parent and peer attachments of 941 Chinese adolescents in China found out that parent and peer attachment were not analogous and both had contributing impacts on psychological outcomes of adolescents. This blew a fresh insight into the perception about attachment and separation in parent and peer attachment styles. Despite interesting findings, the conclusion did not specify causality for psychological outcomes. Besides, adolescents were below 17, which excluded the later stages in adolescence; hence, the generalisation for adolescence may be misinterpreted. Also, gender was not observed as a fundamental factor, which limited a complete understanding of gender roles as an important social psychology related concepts (Rosander & Eriksson, 2012). From another point of view, Gorrese and Ruggieri (2012) reported that females were more closely attached to others than males either securely or anxiously.

Armsden and Greenberg (1987) first proposed that between peer attachment and self-esteem existed a optimistic connection in late adolescence. Although this robust findings provided the direction for further research, the participants in the first test and re-test were 86 and 27 respectively, leaving a sceptical view due to the sample size among critics. Another study suggested that peer attachment was correlated to self-esteem level among institutional students ($\beta = 0.23$) (Mota & Matos, 2013). This finding was consistent with results in structural equation modeling conducted by Laible et al. (2004). Both highlighted the relevance of attachment with peers and self-evaluation, indicating that the better quality of relationship supports the sense of security, hence, fosters self-esteem. However, the demographic distribution of genders in these studies was dominant females, which may impacts on the response bias due to gender roles.

The anxious individuals depend on others to value them as concerns about self and others lead to the reduction in self-evaluation. When receiving positive responses of others, they gained higher self-esteem; and vice versa. On the other hand, avoidant people do not rely on others for self-recognition so the other's assessment does not necessarily have a meaning. According to Foster et al. (2007), anxious attachment was highly associated with unstable self-esteem; whereas, avoidant attachment was not significantly related to stability in self-esteem. This introduced a new direction in measuring the stability of self-esteem in a longitudinal approach. However, this study on young and older adult population sample, which reflects the maturity in personality and social conformity. This direction would better

match for adolescent group as they have not fully developed a constant self-perception and are vulnerable to several changes.

Self-determination theory by Ryan et al. (2001) established an association between well-being and attachment styles. The level of fulfilment in three fundamental mental desires for autonomy, competence, and correspondence to other defines human well-being. Therefore, the level of attachment quality attributes to the well-being status of people. According to the attachment theory by Bowlby (1967, 1997), attachment provides a sense of belonging that increases the confidence and reduces the worry. For example, deep love and trustful friendship provide sources of happiness; also, the relationship at work shapes happiness (Haar et al., 2019.; Kim et al., 2020). These above stated relational aspects are globally endorsed in a cultural and religious perspectives (Ryff & Singer, 2008). In the life-span theory, adult developmental stage is accompanied by both intimacy as closeness to others and generativity as willingness to direct to others (Erikson, as cited in Ryff & Singer, 2008).

To date, several studies concluded that adolescents' outcomes in mental health, and well-being were closely connected to their friendship (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Balluerka et al., 2016; Karreman & Vingerhoets, 2012; Oldfield et al., 2016). To illustrate, Karreman and Vingerhoets (2012) reported that in a sample of 632 Dutch participants, secure attachment was found to relate with better well-being; while anxious attachment influences negatively on one's well-being. However, they also reported that avoidant attachment could positively anticipate the level of well-being. They argued that although avoidant attachment was an insecure style, it could possibly predict an increase in the level of wellness for a reason. People of avoidant attachment do not expect other's opinion to evaluate themselves. Besides, they tend to be self-reliant and independent; therefore, they hold a strong belief in themselves and are not interfered by others. Unfortunately, this study covered a wide age range from 16 to 65, which made it difficult to produce a fair conclusion for all age groups so the findings remained skeptical.

Balluerka et al. (2016) presented a further support for the above theoretical framework that well-being increase was connected with higher secure attachment level among secondary students. In this study, correlation and regression tests at individual level and class level were conducted, which was reasonable and feasible for this population. They concluded that well-being reduced overall when adolescents grow older; however; there was a link between peer attachment and higher well-being. As a result, they highlighted the importance in promoting a class environment to assure the development of well-being through building up self-esteem and emotional intelligence rather than traditional deductive approach. However, this study imposed a limitation in the methodology as findings purely from quantitative data hindered generalisation for such a larger group of population and self-report measure faced obvious restriction in response bias. Nevertheless, this study on a big sample size contributed interesting results for the less-focussed domain of well-being and peer attachment.

Self-Esteem and Well-being

Sociometer theory (Leary, 2004) defined self-esteem as an internal monitor of an individual's social acceptance and inclusion. Individuals with high self-esteem evaluate themselves as socially appreciated and accepted. This perception increases the level of the psychological well-being with positive emotions, life satisfaction, and application of coping strategies in difficulties. This argument is consistent with approach by Ryff (1989) in terms of analogous constitutional element of well-being. Demirtaş (2023) investigated the level of self-esteem and happiness among students of different faculties in Turkey. It was concluded that music

students had higher level of happiness and self-esteem in comparison to other groups. However, other students presented a higher level of self-competence but a moderate level in self-liking realm. This conclusion implied an association; however, only among music students and the impact of music may also be a confounding factor that was not explicitly discussed. Likewise, self-esteem was found to be positively related to the well-being among young adults in Italia (Matera et al., 2019; Nonterah et al., 2023). In these studies, researchers conducted correlational and regression analysis, so they could hardly conclude the direction of causality, which limited the practical application from the research findings.

Both attachment styles and self-esteem have been compiled together in evaluating psychological wellness in adult population (Sechi et al., 2020), adolescent population (Gallarin & Alonso-Arbiol, 2012; Millings et al., 2012; Mota & Matos, 2013). The findings in those studies were consistent that secure peer attachment and higher self-esteem correlate with better quality of mental health. Sechi et al. (2020) concluded these variables as protection for female living quality; meanwhile, insecure attachment and low self-esteem predicted lower quality of lives. The population sample was all females, so it failed to reflect the reality of the mix-gender society. Additionally, in measuring peer attachment, self-esteem and depression level, Millings et al. (2012) reported that positive self-esteem and secure peer attachment style correlated negatively with the level of adolescent depression among 5022 teenagers from 11 to 16 in the UK. Similarly, Gallarin and Alonso-Arbiol (2012) disclosed an analogous tendency with aggressiveness and anti-social behaviors. Those finding was critical and valuable for building up suitable intervention for young adolescents. Although those studied different aspects of mental health, the findings still implied that higher self-esteem and secure attachment correlated with elevated positivity and vice versa. These appeared to be coherent with the theory of attachment (Bowlby, 1969, 1997).

Method

Participants

Data was collected from first-year students at Hanoi University in the Faculty of English Language. To recruit participants, convenient sampling method was utilised for the suitability in the openness to access, geographical vicinity and availability during researching time frame (Etikan et al., 2016). After excluding invalidated responses, 134 responses were collected for the survey. The mean age of participants was 19.9 ($SD=2.06$), in which mean of male age was 19.76 ($SD= 2.47$), mean of female age was 18.82 ($SD= 2.89$) and one participant (19 years old) prefers not to mention their gender.

Measures

An online survey consisting of three main parts of measuring attachment styles, psychological wellbeing and self-esteem was designed. Besides, the survey asked basic demographic information of participants. Online survey was helpful in the procedure of creating a questionnaire, storing responses and visualising data (Siva et al., 2019). All items in the Adolescent Friendship Attachment Scale (AFAS) (Wilkinson, 2008), Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) (Tennant et al., 2007), and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) (Rosenberg, 1965) were examined for the purpose of this study. The first scale, the Adolescent Friendship Attachment Scale (AFAS) was designed for self-report to evaluate the adolescent close relationship with their friend as an attachment figure in the society. The AFAS was reported to attain a high level of internal consistency. Cronbach alpha

value $>.70$ presents acceptable internal consistency (Wanous & Hudy, 2001). For this scale, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each subscale in the AFAS are Secure ($\alpha=.914$), Anxious ($\alpha=.810$), Avoidant ($\alpha=.788$), and overall ($\alpha=.916$) (Wilkinson, 2008). Wilkinson (2008) evaluated the convergent and criterion-related validity and concluded that this scale attained a significant convergence ($r=.667, p<.01$) with peer attachment subscales in the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). This scale has been widely used in psychological studies since its publication and translated and validated in various languages including Italian, Chinese and Korean (Baiocco et al., 2017; Jiang et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2017). Secondly, the WEMWBS was constructed to measure the positive affect, interpersonal relationship and active functioning. The overall Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha=.83$ for student sample and $\alpha=.91$ for population sample, which indicated a significant internal consistency (Tennant et al., 2007). Besides, the test-retest reassured the reliability with high Cronbach's alpha coefficient $\alpha=.83$ (Tennant et al., 2007). Lastly, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) of 10 self-report items with five negative and five affirmative statements developed to measure the perception of individuals about their values. Some studies discussed the dimensionality of the RSES to criticise the privilege of this scale in comparison with other multi-factor constitutions (Fleming & Courtney, 1984; Goldsmith, 1986). Although controversy exists, the global self-esteem attained a wide popularity for its reliability and validity. Regarding the internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha was reported to be from .86 to .93 (Goldsmith, 1986) and of .88 (Fleming & Courtney, 1984), both of which assure a high reliability of the RSES.

For the age range, all above scales were applied for adolescents, which matched with the age group of population in this study. Last but not least, the administrating advantages including being concise, time-saving meet the needs of this study purpose.

Data Analysis Plan

After excluding unanswered responses, there were missing data in the dataset. Considering the missing mechanism (Little & Rubin, 2019), it did not affect the analysis whether missing or observing because the missing value in the dataset is not related to the values of variables. This feature was grouped as Missing Completely at Random (MCAR). Besides, it is necessary to make use of the most collected data when the research recruited small participants (Song & Shepperd, 2007). Therefore, Pairwise Deletion (PD) missing data ignoring technique was used. In other words, all recorded data enter statistical analysis; meanwhile, missing data were ignored (Strike et al., 2001). The statistical values were scored according to the original instructions of the instruments. In each instrument, for items with opposite semantic meaning, the values were reversed appropriately to be positively correlated with the traditional meaning of the scale (Barnette, 2000).

For items on a continuum, mean and SD were reported in tables and categorical items were reported in percentage. Test of normality and histogram visualisation were used to assure normal distribution of statistic. Reliability of each variable was checked via Cronbach's alpha to assure the internal consistency. After that, correlational analysis and regression were conducted for statistical analysis.

Results

Within the scope of this study, the AFAS recorded overall Cronbach's value ($\alpha=.72$) and subscales: secure ($\alpha=.88$), anxious ($\alpha=.64$), avoidant ($\alpha=.80$), which also revealed good total internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha for anxious was lower than previous studies,

which might be the results of responding patterns and cease cautions in interpretation in the analysis. However, regarding the overall quality, AFAS measure is suitable in terms of the scale reliability. Within the present study, the Cronbach's alpha of the WEMWBS and the RSES is .89 and .81 respectively. These values indicated that items in each instrument were consistent in measuring the construct of the scale.

Secure attachment style was recorded with numerical values ($M = 2.93$, $SD = .52$). In comparison to previous research, this sample had a lower Mean in Secure and higher standard deviation (Lee et al., 2017). Shapiro Wilk statistics for Secure score ($w = .98$, $p = .264$), in association with skewness (.31), kurtosis (.11) indicated a normal distribution. Regarding other attachment styles, anxious attachment style scores ($M = 2.15$, $SD = .61$) with males ($M = 2.29$, $SD = .71$) and females ($M = 2.11$, $SD = .56$). Shapiro Wilk statistic of anxious ($w = .97$, $p = .068$) bearing in mind the skewness (.58) and kurtosis (.78) provide evidence for the normality. On the other hand, it was evident that students were more significantly associated with avoidant attachment style ($M = 3.10$, $SD = .69$). Shapiro-Wilk test of normality indicated a deviation from normal data distribution ($w = .97$, $p = .029$) in avoidant scale. Given the deviation in data distribution of avoidant variable, non-parametric test of association Spearman's r was used to compute the correlation for avoidant and the variables of self-esteem and well-being.

In terms of self-esteem scale ($M = 2.67$, $SD = .44$), Shapiro Wilk statistic ($w = .98$, $p = .187$), skewness (-.01), kurtosis (.08) implied good evidence of the normality. According to descriptive data of self-esteem, males ($M = 2.7$, $SD = .51$) displayed greater self-esteem than females ($M = 2.6$, $SD = .42$). Generally, 83% students showed a positive attitude toward their selves. Far more than 50% of students agreed or strongly agreed to be satisfied with themselves, have good qualities, be able to do things well equally to other people, meanwhile 35%, 44%, and 45% of those felt that they were a failure, sometimes useless or no good respectively. What's noteworthy is that while 80% reported to wish they could have more respect for themselves., 17% did not have positivity of their own. Although these surprising statistics were at high rate, the statements were not representative but happened at time as stated in these items. In other words, students generally had positive emotions and confidence, however, those feelings were inconsistent. This self-reported evidence highlighted a direction for practitioners to integrate proper support to improve listed negative feelings.

In well-being scale, mean value was 2.67 ($SD = .44$) and Shapiro Wilk statistic ($w = .98$, $p = .204$), skewness (-.14), kurtosis (-.68) supported for data's normal distribution. Male students ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.03$) were at a higher level of well-being in comparison to female counter-part ($M = 3.34$, $SD = .79$). More than 50 percent of students reported that they often or always had positive feeling of being useful, optimistic, relaxed, confident and interested in others. However, about 30% of those who never or rarely thought positively about themselves.

The Relationship Among Peer Attachment Styles, Self-Esteem and Well-being

From Pearson's r value analysis, the correlation coefficient indicated that there was not a significant correlation between secure attachment and self-esteem. However, it is worth noting that according to Schober and Schwarte's (2018) interpretation framework, the connection between anxious attachment and the level of self-esteem was found to be negatively and moderately correlated ($r(178) = -.28$, $p = .014$). About 7.8% of the variability in

statistical self-esteem was accounted for by the anxious attachment ($r^2 = .078$). Besides, from the Spearman's correlation testing, avoidant attachment style was not significantly correlated with the level of self-esteem ($\rho(175) = .13$, n.s).

The result showed that the relationship between secure attachment style and well-being was statistically significant ($r(172) = .29$, $p = .015$). The Pearson's r value ($r = .29$) suggests a moderate positive relationship between these two variables (Schober & Schwarte, 2018). Approximately 8.4% of the alterability in well-being was accounted for by the secure attachment ($r^2 = .084$). Meanwhile, there was no significant correlation between anxious attachment and the level of well-being because p value = .148. Lastly, Spearman's r test of correlation showed that the association between avoidant attachment and the level of well-being was not found to be statistically significant because p value = .726.

It was evident that a positive correlation existed between self-esteem and well-being ($r(172) = .58$, $p < .001$), indicating a strong and positive relationship between these two variables. Approximately 33.6% of the variance in well-being was by the self-esteem ($r^2 = .336$).

Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was applied with well-being score as criterion variable and self-esteem and secure attachment as predictor variables. The residual errors proved no first order autocorrelation ($DW = 1.8$, $p = .384$) and Omnibus ANOVA preceded significant value because $p < .001$ and $p = .011$ respectively for self-esteem and secure attachment. The connection between criterion variable and predictor variables illustrated a moderate connection ($R = .66$) with an adjusted R^2 of 42, indicating that 42% of deviation in well-being statistics could be predicted. Statistical evidence suggested that this relationship was significant higher than the chance level ($F(2,164) = 24.94$, $p < .001$). Both self-esteem and secure attachment were significant predictors for the level of well-being ($t(164) = 6.51$, $p < .001$ and $t(164) = 2.63$, $p = .011$ respectively). In particular, each adding unit in self-esteem could predict an extra 1.16 unit of well-being, whereas, an additional point in secure attachment could predict an increase of 0.4 unit in well-being.

From statistical analysis, self-esteem and well-being had a significant association. This supported the sociometer theory that self-esteem as a contributing factor for overall well-being of a person (Leary, 2004). The findings presented evidence for validating the sociometer theory in Asian context with university population. This was also meaningful for interventions or project advancing well-being that self-esteem should be a core component to improve.

Table 1. Multiple Regression Output*Model Fit Measures*

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Overall Model Test			
				F	df1	df2	p
1	0.66	0.44	0.42	24.94	2	164	< .001

Model Coefficients - Well-being

Predictor	Estimate	SE	95% Confidence Interval		t	p	Stand. Estimate
			Lower	Upper			
Intercept	-0.98	0.66	-2.29	0.34	-1.49		0.142
Self-esteem	1.16	0.18	0.81	1.52	6.51	< .001	0.61
Secure	0.40	0.15	0.10	0.71	2.63	0.011	0.25

Discussion*Peer Attachment Styles*

Results of the peer attachment style survey (AFAS) presented that only 10.6% participants presented an anxious peer attachment, 32.1% indicated a secure peer attachment and 57.3% affirmed avoidant peer attachment. This meant avoidant attachment style was prevalent among all attachment styles among university students in Hanoi University, Vietnam. Participants in this population were at their late adolescence, which indicated they were independent enough to work and study and university friends may not be their only source of emotional support all the times. Therefore, the finding provided good illustration for the developmental stage in late adolescence in terms of self-regulation and interpersonal adjustment. Subsequently, it can be implied that university students do not indeed rely on their university friends for emotional and social support.

The percentage of people with secure attachment styles was lower than findings from previous studies in Western and Asian contexts. The mean score of secure in this scale was below other past research following the same scale (Lee et al., 2017). This finding should be interpreted carefully because it may be a result of cultural, familial and social factors. The parenting styles between Eastern and Western countries are way distinct (Nguyen et al., 2020), which may contribute to the formation of attachment styles. Oriental culture regards parents as main source of income of the family and it should be normal and ethical for children to obey and follow the instructions of parents to keep face for the family, work and show respect for the elders (Sung, 2010). This kind of practice put the relationship in family in line with a hierarchical order in stead of basing on care giving and affectionism. As a result, children either avoided sharing or being close to their parents, otherwise, they were afraid of punishment and wanted to stick to another adult to rely on for instant emotional

protection. These features are categorised into insecure attachment styles of avoidant and anxious respectively.

Self-Esteem

Previous studies explored the level of self-esteem in various social contexts baring in mind the origin of adolescence as a contributing factor (Millings et al., 2012). They concluded that Asian descent students had significantly lower self-esteem levels in comparison with native English speaking students in a cross-cultural context. However, in Vietnamese context, the overall self-evaluation was proved to be higher than the average level of the scale, especially with general assessments. Therefore, the researcher proposed that in a social context of the same native culture, students gained more confidence and belief in themselves.

University Students' Well-being

The percentages of negative well-being evaluation were found to be in line with previous findings about mental health among Vietnamese youngsters (Thi et al., 2018). According to Thi et al. (2018), depression of first-year undergraduate students in Tra Vinh University were 39.9% and it followed an increasing pattern till the 4th year with significant p value ($p=.0.019$). It can be observed a similar prevalence in the low well-being report and depression level of university students in Vietnamese context. The percentage results showed a similar pattern with students' well-being report in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, and Sweden with more than 50% feeling positive and perceived good qualities in themselves while around 30% never or rarely experienced that positivity (Lyyra et al., 2021). Previous studies on student well-being compared the level of distress of students in year one, year two and year three (Bewick et al., 2010) yielded a particularly comparable trend. It was concluded that the level of depression was always higher than the time prior to enter higher education, which indicated a challenge in adjusting to university. Although this study was in the UK, the level of well-being among university students throughout university time was proportional with statistical report in Vietnamese context. Subsequently, there exists a raising concern that in the upcoming time, this population would undergo a lower level of well-being accompanied by higher depression.

The Relationships Among Peer Attachment, Self-Esteem and Students' Well-being

This study's finding supported previous results from several studies that self-esteem and well-being had a significant association (Blank et al., 2016; Leary, 2004; Lynn, 2009; Millings et al., 2012; Peng et al., 2019). Although these studies were conducted in diverse population of adolescents and adults, the conclusion converged the connecting pathway of these variables. Regarding peer attachment styles, previous findings synthesised comparable results that anxious attachment was associated with lower self-esteem (Aviezer et al., 2002; Marshall & Mazzucco, 1995; Millings et al., 2012; Sechi et al., 2020; Wilkinson et al., 2015). It was statistically evident that avoidant peer attachment style was significantly correlated with the level of psychological well-being in this study, which deserved future investigation into the confounding factors for better insights.

Conclusion

It is worth-noting that the avoidant attachment style was dominant among university students. The correlational test outcomes demonstrated that anxious attachment was negatively correlated with self-esteem scale, which supported for attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1978; Bowlby, 1969) and self-determination theory (Ryan et al., 2001). Therefore, this finding confirmed the above theoretical viewpoints in Vietnamese context. From statistical analysis, self-esteem and well-being had a significant association. This backed up the sociometer theory that self-esteem as a contributing factor for overall well-being of a person (Leary, 2004). The findings supported validating the sociometer theory in Asian context with university population. However, there was not a significant correlation between secure attachment and self-esteem in this study, which was different from previous research. Possible confounding factors for this outcomes such as origin, year of relationship, gender and so on could impact on the level of connection between two variables. That said, both were correlated to well-being in general, indicating a bridging connection for positive psychological features.

These findings were limited by several factors. Self-reported data from questionnaire survey may mitigate the validity (Wilkinson & Parry, 2004). This likely resulted in underestimating some data as confounding factors.

In summary, this report has increased the awareness of the university students' well-being in Vietnam and provided a direction to support school managers and policy makers in fostering student well-being not by approaching it as a single target in educational settings but through promisingly promoting secure attachment and self-esteem. Future research should on the construct of student well-being and varied indicators to identify explicit components to boost student's well-being for practical purposes.

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