

# ENHANCING THE ROLE OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

MA. Ta Thi Thu Hue

*Faculty of Political Theory and Social Sciences and Humanities People's Police Academy*

## ABSTRACT

School psychological counseling for students in school-related fields is becoming an urgent issue of concern to schools and society. The need for school psychological counseling is more evident in students' relationships with parents, friends and teachers. School psychological counseling plays a very important role in the spiritual life of students, lecturers and staff in schools. Faced with the requirements of digital transformation in the field of Education and Training, the paper uses the method of document research to systematize the theoretical basis related to psychological counseling in the context of digital transformation, the difficulties and propose some solutions to improve the effectiveness of school psychological counseling activities for learners. The paper offers some solutions to contribute to improving the effectiveness of school psychological counseling for students in the current context of digital transformation.

**KEYWORDS:** Solutions, effectiveness, psychological counseling, students, high school.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Modern society along with the 4.0 revolution has brought people many positive changes, and the quality of life is increasingly improved. People have access to technology and improvements in almost every field, including education and training. Therefore, today's students have many opportunities to learn, experience and develop themselves. In that general trend, schools, in addition to investing in innovation to improve the quality of education to meet increasingly higher demands for knowledge, also have to face and solve a series of problems related to the formation and development of learners' qualities and abilities. In the past decade, every year there have been countless unfortunate incidents in the school environment that have caused a stir in public opinion, such as fights, stripping of friends, suicide due to exam pressure, study pressure, cheating, robbery... The underlying cause of these sad events comes from the fact that schools and families do not pay attention to the psychology of students while they are still in school, especially during puberty (high school) and first year students (university) - when they are undergoing major changes in psychology, physiology and learning environment. Therefore, school psychological counseling helps students understand their own values, playing a very important role for the school and the whole society. At the same time, school counseling also helps students identify goals, choose effective learning methods and orient their careers in accordance with their abilities and society's human resource needs.

## 2. CONTENTS

### 2.1. School psychological counseling in the context of digital transformation - Some theoretical issues

#### 2.1.1. The concept of "Digital Transformation"

Digital transformation in education is the application of technical technology to the training and teaching purposes of an educational system or institution. In which, digital transformation in education has three basic applications: application of technology in teaching methods, application of technology in management and application of technology in the classroom. Education is one of the priority investment areas in the national digital transformation program. Digital transformation in the education sector plays a very important role in improving the effectiveness of student training activities. Digital transformation in the education sector requires a unified national technology platform so that everyone in the education sector can participate. Digital and academic resources also need to be implemented on unified technology so that all online learning, teaching, and learning activities bring the best results.

### 2.1.2. Concept of “Counseling” and “School Psychological Counseling”

“Tham vấn” is called “Counseling” in English. Counseling is a process of psychological assistance in which the counselor uses his knowledge, professional skills and professional attitudes to establish a positive interactive relationship with the client to help them perceive problematic situations to change their emotions, thoughts, behaviors and find solutions to their problems.

School psychological counseling or school counseling is the helping all students in their studies, in social relationships, in work, in improving their personal capacity and helping them become responsible and useful people. School counselors assist in the formation and organization of all these programs and provide appropriate counseling interventions.

### 2.2. The importance of school psychological counseling

With the strong globalization trend in almost all aspects of social life today, it is very normal for a 6–10-years-old child to be able to proficiently use a smartphone. Adults are always buried in work and have little time for their children, so most parents let their children come into contact with technology devices and social networks quite early to keep them quiet and from causing trouble. Parents can control the time and limit the content their children are allowed to view, but how can they be sure that their children will not be able to access that content? Children’s curiosity is very high, especially teenagers. The more you forbid, the more they want to explore. Just being exposed to a short film or a game that tends to be violent such as shooting, wrestling, virtual reality... for a short time can also affect a child’s psychology. Therefore, to prevent children from having wrong thoughts and actions, families and schools need to guide and care for children’s mental and psychological health from an early age.

Although it has been popularized since the end of 2017 about organizing the psychological counseling in schools, most schools set up School Psychological Counseling Rooms just for show. School leaders have not yet realized the importance of school psychological counseling, have not invited psychological experts, have not promoted it to students and parents, and many people do not even know the existence of this room in the school. This makes school psychological counseling not as effective as expected, and the lack of orientation for students is becoming alarming because it negatively affects their future in particular and the future of the country in general.

A reality that many parents and teachers forget is that students between the ages of 12, 13 - 17, 18 are very difficult stages. During this stage, children have to accept big changes in their body, thinking and personality. This is the stage when children are not yet adults but are no longer children. Children’s perceptions and emotions at this stage are not really mature and can be distorted without attention and help from family and school.

It can be seen that between the ages of 13 and 17, children are very sensitive to being scolded or blamed by their parents, especially in the presence of a third person. They are easily angered, impulsive and lack of thought in their words and actions... In addition, children at this age also like to prove themselves, practice being “adult” and like to explore everything around them. Many scientific studies show that most men are addicted to cigarettes because they have been exposed to it since they were in school in one way or another. Moreover, using violence at this age is not only a way to help children feel comfortable, relieve pressure from family (excessive expectations from parents), pressure from studying, exams or pressure about the future (richness, success) but also helps them affirm their position with everyone, demonstrate their bravery to children of the same age. This has caused school violence to become more intense and widespread. In Vietnam, according to data released by the Ministry of Education and Training, in one school year, there were nearly 1,600 incidents of students fighting inside and outside of school nationwide. According to statistics from the Ministry of Education and Training, for every 5,200 students, there is one fight; for every 11,000 students, one is forced to leave school because of fighting; for every 9 schools, one has students fighting... Thus, school violence has become a concern for many families, schools and a concern for the whole society because of the serious consequences it causes.

In addition, at this age, children may develop special feelings for the opposite sex, and even their bodies are developing comprehensively. If families and schools do not care and educate children about sex right from this time, they will easily have relationships with the opposite sex, easily get sexually transmitted diseases and more seriously, get pregnant unintentionally. It is estimated that over 10% of unmarried women between the ages of 15 and 24 have had at least one unwanted pregnancy. Unwanted pregnancies not only lead to negative consequences such as abortion (both safe and unsafe), early school dropout, family and social exclusion, or poverty. Therefore, counseling on school love psychology and early sex education for children are very important.

Moreover, a survey on gender among school-age children showed that more than 20% of them identified themselves as the third gender. Among them, because of many special interests such as cutting short hair, liking to play sports, having a strong personality or seeing many friends around them who are homosexual, they imitate and consider themselves to be of the third gender but physiologically they are not. Whether or not adolescents have difficulty in gender identity and have problems with sexual orientation is mainly related to sex education of the surrounding environment with them when they are young.

In the context of an increasingly developing society, most parents want their children to be successful and talented in the future. However, when standing at the threshold of university, many students still do not know what they like? Don't know what major to choose? Or what will I study in my chosen major? Reality shows that many students after graduation are unemployed or do not work in the right field or even give up on university because they do not really like that field or feel that they are not suitable for this career. Perhaps the lack of orientation from the beginning is part of the reason why a part of young people fails, become frustrated and lack direction as they are today.

Through this, it can be seen that school psychological counseling is very necessary and should be promoted for children right from when they are still in school, paying special attention to puberty, when there are physical and psychological changes. School psychological counseling not only solves the problems students are facing but also helps improve the relationships between students - teachers, children - parents, friends - friends... Psychological counseling will help students overcome obstacles and difficulties in studying and life. They will feel calm, less stressed and tired, and thus help them study more effectively and live a happier life.

### **2.3. Current forms of school psychological counseling in universities**

School psychological counseling can take many different forms, depending on the student's specific needs and situation. Below are common forms of counseling in school settings:

**Individual Counseling:** Purpose: Focusing on students' individual problems, helping them solve psychological, emotional, behavioral or learning difficulties; Method: Students will meet and talk with the counselor in a private space. Conversations can revolve around topics such as anxiety, depression, conflicts with friends or family, or learning difficulties.

**Group Counseling:** Purpose: Supporting many students who share a similar problem or concern, helping them feel less alone and learn from the experiences of others; Method: Small groups of students participate in counseling sessions together under the guidance of a counselor. Topics may include developing social skills, managing stress, or providing support during a crisis.

**Family Counseling:** Purpose: Solving family-related problems, improve relationships between students and family members; Method: Counselors work with students and their families to discuss and resolve conflicts, misunderstandings, or other issues affecting the student.

**Crisis Counseling:** Purpose: Providing immediate support to students in emergency or crisis situations, such as school violence, loss of a loved one or accident; Method: Crisis counseling usually takes place immediately when a serious situation occurs. The counselor will help students stabilize their psychology and provide support solutions.

**Activity-Based Counseling:** Purpose: Using activities such as art, games, or group activities to help students express and process their emotions; Methods: Instead of just talking, counselors can guide students to engage in creative activities that help them release emotions and develop problem-solving skills.

**Preventive Counseling:** Purpose: Focusing on preventing psychological problems before they become serious; Method: Schools can organize workshops, psycho-education or activities to raise students' awareness of mental health, helping them develop the life skills needed to cope with difficulties.

**Referral Counseling:** Purpose: When students need more intensive support, school counselors can refer them to psychologists or specialized medical facilities; Methods: The counselor assesses the student's situation and, if necessary, contact with outside professional services to ensure the student receives the best support.

## 2.4. Some difficulties in school psychology of students today

### 2.4.1. Regarding love and sex

If in the past, student love was considered a pure, innocent feeling, now there have been many changes, tending to become a trend among today's youth. With the development of the Internet, students are exposed to multi-dimensional images and information from social networks, leading to a situation of going beyond limits, affecting their studies, health and mental life. In reality, many female students have had to drop out of school due to unwanted pregnancies or going to hospitals and medical centers to "deal with the consequences".

Besides, anxiety about gender identity is also one of the problems that many students encounter. Some children doubt their own gender, have difficulty in accepting their own gender, and worry about gender discrimination from friends...

### 2.4.2. Regarding mental health

Data compiled from psychological analysts shows:

Contents	Percentage
Students feel they are not understood and empathized	>50%
Students are in a state of facing some difficulties in one or more areas.	>70%
Students choose to confide and share with friends more than with family and parents.	85%
Students choose suicide because they feel their parents do not understand and sympathize with them.	90%
High school students lose direction and feel confused when faced with choosing a university major.	75%
Freshmen feel stuck and depressed because of mistakes in choosing a major.	30%
Second-year students feel stuck and depressed because of mistakes in choosing a major.	50%
Adolescents engage in criminal behavior because of disorientation and lack of family care.	90%

### 2.4.3. Regarding participating in social evils

Besides school violence, students' participation in social evils such as: drug use, stimulant use, traffic safety violations, robbery...is also alarming. According to statistics surveyed and published in July 2017 by the Department of Social Evils Prevention and Control (Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs) in collaboration with the Center for Supporting Community Development Initiatives (SCDI), up to 8% of drug addicts are minors and students. During the summer, the risk of social evils among students tends to increase, especially those arising from being addicted to games, sucking "laughing gas", gambling, drinking alcohol, beer, etc.

Students' involvement in social evils can stem from many different causes such as: Psychology of wanting to assert oneself, lack of life skills, being lured and seduced, lack of management from family and school. Students' involvement in social evils not only threatens social order and security and the school but also seriously affects students' health, learning situation and personality development. Therefore, this is one of the issues that needs to be addressed by the community, schools and families.

## 2.5. Some solutions to improve the effectiveness of school psychological counseling for students in the context of digital transformation

From the above analysis, the author proposes some solutions to improve the effectiveness of psychological counseling activities, specifically as follows:

2.5.1. Raising awareness of the role of school psychological counseling. At university age, the pressure of studying, the pressure of living away from home and complicated relationships, some cases of physical and sexual problems, if not consulted promptly, can lead to psychological crisis, suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts. In fact, in universities, there have been many cases of student suicide due to psychological deadlocks that were not promptly resolved. Therefore, school psychological counseling is necessary not only in high schools but also in universities. Psychological counseling is not just for "extreme" or severe cases. Don't wait until there is a big problem before looking for a solution. You should detect the problem when it is still latent or at a mild level, preventing bad situations from arising. School psychological counseling is a specialized job that requires specialized knowledge, skills, practical experience, and is done full-time. To raise awareness, it is necessary to do a good job of popularizing information about the urgency of school psychological counseling, the work, tasks and responsibilities of school psychological counselors to students, parents and educators on the school's website and encourage sharing on Facebook and Zalo pages of educators, parents, students and social networks. Schools need

to develop specific counseling activity plans for each school year, diversifying school counseling activities for lecturers, students and, when necessary, for parents as needed.

2.5.2. Practicing psychological counseling skills. Counselors need to master and practice proficiently and flexibly the basic and advanced counseling skills such as: Listening skills: It is the ability to apply knowledge and experience to focus on listening, observing carefully, and paying attention to understand students' true feelings and thoughts in what they share. Good listening skills help create a good relationship between students and counselors and help counselors fully and accurately grasp the problems students are facing; Questioning skills: Using good questioning skills will create interaction, positive communication, collect information about students' problems; understand students' thoughts and opinions while helping students to be aware of themselves and their circumstances, and stimulate students' strengths and potential in solving their own problems. Counselors need to flexibly apply the skills of asking closed questions, open questions, emotional questions, questions about causes, and questions about solutions; Information providing skills: To provide good information to students, counselors need to proactively improve their professional knowledge, master the regulations of the Ministry of Education and Training, the school, and the faculty, and practice the skills of communicating information clearly and coherently when counseling students. Students will choose the best solution for themselves from the information provided with the support of their academic advisor. This will help to relieve negative emotions and create a more comfortable psychological state for students during their study time; Encouraging skills: Counselors understand students' problems, encourage and support students to be confident in themselves, helping students improve their awareness and ability to solve problems themselves. Counselors need to encourage and motivate students with their positive changes, even if those are just small changes; and agree with students' right thinking, helping students feel motivated to continue. Encouragement is expressed through verbal language as well as gestures and actions. In addition to encouraging skills, academic advisors also support students in solving problems by suggesting and analyzing the benefits of each solution in their case, or connecting and introducing students to addresses (Faculty, Department, Center), or connecting students with individuals who can support them in solving problems. Except in cases of absolute necessity, the information that students share must be kept confidential by the counselor to respect personal privacy.

2.5.3. Developing a team of school psychologists. Student problems in school can happen to any student, at any school, at any level. However, in reality, not every school has a team of school psychologists to help students in a scientific and methodical way. This team currently only appears in some schools in big cities or in some schools with scale and conditions. Reality requires the development of a team of school psychologists to effectively help students solve problems at school.

2.5.4. Developing a training strategy that focuses on school psychological counseling. Schools are working to incorporate formal school counseling programs into school activities, regulating coordination and related issues between schools - teachers - students and counselors. For schools with a department specializing in psychology, it is necessary to direct research and draft short-term and long-term school counseling training programs, based on references to training programs of universities around the world to ensure a complete, professional, quality program. School counseling should be included as part of the academic counseling program.

2.5.5. Completing policies related to the network environment such as: Network security. Schools need to have a full system of technological equipment and applications of advanced science and technology. This is the first requirement to be able to apply and implement school psychological counseling activities in the context of digital transformation. Counselors need to have the knowledge and skills to meet digital transformation requirements. First of all, the skills of using information technology on technological devices such as (smartphones, computers, laptops, etc.), information security skills, skills of exploiting and effectively using applications for work, updating scientific and technological advances 4.0 on tools and devices such as: Big Data, Internet of Things (IoT), virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), pro-actively innovating and updating modern communication methods of learners to be closer to children such as social networks Facebook, Zalo... creating more "real" practical experiences for school psychological counseling.

2.5.6. Increasing funding, having appropriate policies, facilities, processes and documents in order to increase the effectiveness of the counseling team, psychological counseling room and psychological counseling for students in the school. To have sufficient funding for psychological counseling activities and commensurate with the quality of professional psychologists, in addition to taking from regular expenditure sources as instructed in Circular 31, universities can mobilize additional funding from well-off parents, philanthropists, sponsors, and alumni. Regarding facilities and working conditions, we can think about Australia's policy of supporting psychological counseling activities. In Australia, educational institutions employ school psychologists who are



responsible for providing appropriate resources, including the following: A private, discreet location to provide professional counseling services to university students, with a waiting area; Soundproof counseling rooms help student and psychologist comfort and well suit to group and individual counseling, assessment and counseling; Counseling rooms are designed to maximize the safety of the psychologist; The office must be provided with two exits in case a student or family with aggressive, violent or emotionally disturbed behavior must be treated. Having an emergency alarm; Telephone with voicemail system, computer and printer, tape recorder, lockable file cabinets, stationery and office furniture for conducting counseling, record keeping, and assessments; Having access to all necessary psychological and educational testing materials to fulfill the role of a psychological counselor; Annual budget support to access needs such as peer counseling, expert guidance and professional resources (i.e. books, psychological intervention tools, professional journals, etc.); Administrative processes to allow for approval of leave requests and participation in professional activities appropriate to the psychologist's professional development; Providing adequate transportation and funding for travel to an off-campus destination if requested and necessary for counseling.

Regarding psychological counseling documents, the author recommends that the Vietnam Association of Psychology & Education coordinate with the Ministry of Education and Training and universities to research theories and practices at home and abroad to compile, supplement, and update documents guiding school psychological counseling to ensure that the content of the school counseling program is not only limited to the theoretical framework of counseling but needs to be expanded, combined with the formation of many skills for students in studying, career orientation, and personality development. The form of counseling is not only for individuals but also for all students to support students in developing a complete personality. Practical training sessions for counselors, seminars and conferences sharing experiences in organizing psychological counseling activities in schools need to be organized more to improve the quality of school psychological counseling staff and lecturers.

The psychological counseling room needs to publicize the process of receiving registration and conducting psychological counseling for students, popularizes the forms of registration for psychological counseling via mailbox, email, phone... on the school's website, through homeroom teachers, the School Youth Union... so that parents, students and lecturers have the necessary information.

### 3. CONCLUSION

During the learning process, under the influence of subjective and objective factors, students always have to face many problems that need to be solved. Caring for and assisting students in a timely manner, effectively resolving problems encountered at school are one of the important and meaningful tasks to help students have a healthy learning environment in response to the requirements of the National Digital Transformation Program by 2025, with a vision to 2030, including digital transformation steps in the field of Education and Training. School psychological counseling is a necessary activity, contributing together with the knowledge and skills education of universities to train people with adequate moral qualities, strong professional skills, and healthy spirit to serve society in the future. School psychologists need to be well-trained, have professional qualifications, capacity, and ethical qualities to effectively solve students' psychological problems. Management levels, universities, students, families and society need to be aware of the importance of psychological counseling to closely coordinate with school psychologists, invest in facilities and working conditions for psychological counselors to operate effectively.

### REFERENCES

1. [1] School psychology counseling - history and development, from: <http://welink.vn/tham-vantam-ly-hoc-duong-lich-su-va-phat-trien.html>.
2. [2] Bui Thi Hue, Bui Duc Thinh, Vu Thi Tuyet Lan (2022), Digital transformation in education and training: Current situation and solutions, Vietnam Journal of Science and Technology.
3. [3] Prime Minister (2020), Decision No. 749/QĐ-TTg dated June 3, 2020 on the National Digital Transformation Program to 2025, with a vision to 2030, Hanoi.
4. [4] Vo Van Ban (2002), Psychological treatment practice, Hanoi Medical Publishing House.
5. [5] Nguyen Cong Khanh (2000), Psychotherapy, Hanoi National University Publishing House.
6. [6] Tran Thi Van Hoa (2018), Industrial Revolution 4.0 – Issues for Vietnam's socio-economic development and international integration, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi.
7. [7] Anh Hoa (2019), Understanding school psychology, Dan Tri Publishing House, Hanoi.
8. [8] Pham Thi Mai Huong (2018), Emotionless attitude in the family of adolescents, Social Sciences Publishing House, Hanoi.

9. [9] Dang Hoang Minh (2010), Building a school psychology counseling model at some high schools in Hanoi, Scientific Research Topic, University of Education, Vietnam National University, Hanoi.