

Khmer Students Psychological Difficulties in Learning in the Mekong Delta

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Abstract

The article presents the psychological difficulties of Khmer students in the Mekong Delta. Manifestations of psychological difficulty of Khmer students in learning were identified in terms of perception, attitude, and behavior. These are shown in detail during the whole learning process including lack of confidence in solving problems in group discussions and studying learning materials as well as in learning skills training activities, etc. They are still passive, ineffective in communication, etc.

Keywords: *psychological difficulty, Khmer students, learning.*

1. Introduction

Human personality is formed and developed as a result of activities and communication. However, human activities can not always take place smoothly and effectively as expected. Depending on motivations, goals, tasks, positions and different circumstances, each individual conducts activities and achieves different levels of efficiency. Each individual may encounter certain difficulties and obstacles in his or her field of activity. When encountering difficulties and obstacles, which require people to work hard to overcome or else it will prevent their progress, delaying the process, and people do not achieve the desired purpose.

In particularly, studying at university plays a very important role in the formation and development of students' personality. Learning activities not only help students to have professional knowledge and skills but also form problem-solving skills in difficult and changing situations posed for them.

When participating in learning activities at universities, Khmer students will have to adapt to new and different requirements from their period as a high school student such as new environment, conditions and living conditions. changes, new friends, new ways of learning, increasing amount of knowledge, the teacher's teaching method is also far from high school, etc. This has caused many psychological difficulties for Khmer students in the learning process. Faced with such psychological

difficulties, students can easily become discouraged, neglect their academic tasks or lead to wrong behaviors. This problem negatively affects students' academic performance and personality fulfillment. Finding measures to overcome psychological difficulties in students' learning activities, at the same time helping students find for themselves a reasonable way of learning, full awareness of psychological difficulties will encounter in learning activities are very necessary jobs to contribute to improving learning outcomes in them.

Through the study and survey on the situation of psychological difficulties of Khmer students in the Mekong Delta in learning, the study has tested 125 Khmer students at 3 universities with many local students (An Giang University, Tra Vinh University and Can Tho University), the paper assesses the status of psychological difficulties of Khmer students in learning, as a basis to propose a measures to help students step by step overcome difficulties and achieve better learning results.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Psychological difficulty

Difficulty means that an obstacle is labor-consuming or lacking, requiring a lot of effort to overcome. Particularly, psychological difficulty can be considered and studied from different angles: psychological difficulty is considered as all psychological traits of the individual subject during the operation under certain circumstances. less consistent with the requirements and characteristics of that activity, hindering the process and results of the activity. Psychological difficulty manifests itself in three aspects: perception, attitude and behavior.

The psychological difficulties in learning are the individual psychological characteristics that arise in the student in learning that obstruct the student's learning progress and performance. Psychological difficulties that dominate learning activities and affect the psychological development and personality of students are the shortcomings, obstacles,

psychological obstacles of the subject that need to be overcome to perform a task or an action.

When studying the concept of “psychological difficulty” and “psychological obstacle”, these two terms can be considered as close to each other, sometimes using synonyms, so psychological difficulties can also be considered as obstacles. psychological obstacles, psychological barriers that students encounter when participating in learning activities. In any activity, people always have difficulties and obstacles when they participate in that activity. These difficulties may arise from objective factors such as conditions, means, environment and so on. These are factors that indirectly affect the human process. Subjective factors derive from the subject itself such as perception, attitude, emotions, capacity, experience capital, manipulation of skills to conduct activities. In terms of origin, these factors are divided into two categories: biological factors, psychological factors. The difficulties created by psychological factors are psychological difficulties. It is this subjective factor that directly affects the process and results of human activities.

2.2.1 Awareness

In psychology, awareness is one of the important elements of human psychological life. Awareness helps people to understand phenomena. Normally, awareness is a red thread that directs throughout the process of human actions, helping people express their attitudes and corresponding behaviors when recognizing and evaluating the world objectively. Because learning activities are a complex activity, in the process of participating in learning activities, people do not always have the right awareness, the incorrect and incomplete awareness have caused many psychological difficulties. leading to "step" mistakes in individual learning. The psychological difficulties that often appear in the learning process are: inadequate awareness of learning purposes, plans, content, and methods leading to lack of confidence in learners in the learning process. process of conducting your own learning activities

2.2.2 Behavior

People with psychological difficulties in learning activities often show symptoms such as: lack of confidence, lack of accuracy in expressing learning content, poor learning skills, or in other words, do not know how. applying learning skills in all stages of learning activities. All of these will lead to spontaneous behaviors, not being able to master your own behaviors in the learning process.

2.2.3 Attitude

Usually, those who have little psychological difficulties in learning activities are those who often know how to control their own emotional state,

manifest in being able to control, create excitement, feel positive, know things. control and adjust their own psychological developments. On the basis of that, learn to choose a learning method suitable for the purpose, content and requirements of learning activities to achieve the best results. In contrast, people with psychological difficulties often show lack of emotional restraint, emotion, anxiety, lack of confidence in learning and sometimes lead to a state of indifference to learning activities.

2.2 Khmer students

Research on students, according to X.L. Rubinstein: “Students are representatives of a special social group trained in universities and colleges to prepare for labor activities and produce material or spiritual for society. A very mobile student group organized according to certain social purposes to prepare for the realization of social roles with high professional levels in the fields of economy, society, culture and education. Students are additional resources for the knowledge team trained to become intellectual workers with high professional skills and actively participate in diverse activities beneficial to society”.

From the student terminology above, in our opinion: Khmer ethnic students are young Khmer ethnic minority people, most of whom live in the Mekong River Delta are studying and training to cultivate their knowledge. formulate ethical qualities, lifestyle and develop a comprehensive personality to become a bachelor, future expert in many fields, careers.

Characteristics of ethnic Khmer students:

+ Khmer ethnic minority students may have just left their high school seats and entered the university doorstep with youth, ambition and will to rise. Their personality has been thriving; do not have specialized professional qualities in a certain industry; often there is strong impact in the collective due to the uniqueness of the young human personality; often mimic each other, demonstrating the initial social identity.

+ The majority of Khmer students come from families living in remote areas, with difficult socio-economic conditions, and less exposure to modern technical means and transportation. It is not convenient, with low educational attainment. In general, the knowledge level for university entrance of ethnic minority students is lower than that of students of other ethnic groups. Therefore, in the process of studying in university, especially in the early years of university, it is difficult for them to get acquainted with the method of studying in university and also have many problems in the language.

+ The majority of Khmer students are underdeveloped, their ability to maintain attention is not durable, especially in learning activities. The abstract thinking of Khmer ethnic students is still limited, so in their learning activities, they often do not turn over and over to detect errors or raise

questions and concerns about complex issues. The communication positivity of Khmer students is not high. In communication, they often show indifference, apathy, do not know the language combination with gestures, expressive attitude did not know at the right time, right place. Inferiority is a common trait among Khmer ethnic students. They often feel that they are weak and backward and cannot study well.

However, because from a young age living in a large space, much exposure to nature, the perception of Khmer ethnic students has developed quite well, the sensitivity of hearing and vision helps them to be more favorable in sense. Honesty, frankness, simplicity, courage, love and hate are clearly prominent features in the emotional life of Khmer ethnic students. Their feelings are secret, strong little outward expression, and solid friendship.

Understanding the psychological characteristics of Khmer ethnic students is important in determining the content, form, and methods that affect them in the direction of forming the future expert personality in the university.

3. Materials and Methods

The researcher follows the descriptive approach to present the status of psychological difficulties in learning activities of Khmer students. The author uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to validate data and provide more detailed information.

The questionnaire is the first data collection instrument. In the research, the participants are asked to show their answers on a five-point Likert scale. The scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire will be conducted in Vietnamese version to avoid ambiguity and misunderstanding because the participants are not English native speakers. It consists of two parts developed based on the clusters from the framework established by the literature review. Part A will be involved in the participants' personal information including gender, age and educational background. Part B focuses on Situation of psychological difficulties in learning activities of Khmer students in the Mekong Delta. The quantitative data were collected and analyzed using the computer software Statistics Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.

The second instrument is interview. It provides participants with an opportunity to elaborate on their answer, to discuss their interpretation of the world and to express how they see situations from their own perspective (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012). Therefore, the interview will bring more understanding about the research

participants about the situation and factors affecting psychological difficulties of Khmer students about behavior in learning activities, from there. propose appropriate impact measures. Each interview lasts an average of 10 minutes. The interview will be composed in Vietnamese and prompts are prepared to elicit the responses in cases the participants could not provide a proper answer.

The selected participants included 125 ethnic Khmer students studying at universities in the Mekong Delta. Among them, 75 are female (60%) and 50 are male (40%). Students' age ranges from 19 to 23, studying in many different professions (education, agriculture, economics, law, politics ...). In addition, in-depth interviews with 10 lecturers at the surveyed universities to test measures to help Khmer students overcome psychological difficulties in learning activities.

4. Results

4.1 Quantitative results

To investigate the current situation of Khmer students' psychological difficulties in learning activities, the topic identified: psychological difficulties of Khmer students in learning reflected in three areas: awareness, attitude and behavior. In the field of awareness and attitude, the author used the questionnaire, the statistical results are clarified as follows:

The research results showed that awareness and attitude of Khmer students in learning activities is still weak ($M=2.10$).

Based on the average score of the occurrence of psychological difficulties, there were 5 psychological difficulties that Khmer students encounter at a relatively regular level: Depressed when encountering difficult subjects ($M=2.95$); Excessive anxiety about learning ($M=2.83$); Impatience in learning ($M=2.78$); Timid, shy in learning ($M=2.65$); Loss of temper when facing difficult learning problems ($M=2.42$). Thus, in terms of the psychological difficulties that students encountered at a relatively regular level with the GPA are quite high, these difficulties were expressed in terms of attitude and emotion. This was also consistent with the results when surveying the occurrence of psychological difficulties by each group.

Psychological difficulties reflected in awareness: $M=2.10$;

Psychological difficulty reflected in attitude: $M=2.59$;

Table 1 Psychological difficulties of Khmer students in learning reflected in awareness and attitude

	N	Mean	SD
Psychological difficulties reflected in awareness	125	2.10	0.88
Lack of understanding of the basic subjects	125	2.34	0.89
Lack of understanding of the major	125	1.90	0.85
Awareness of the learning motivation is not clear.	125	2.07	0.86
Ambiguity, lack of understanding about the position, role and importance of subjects in the curriculum.	125	2.06	0.90
Lack of understanding of their academic duties and requirements	125	2.16	0.91
Psychological difficulties reflected in attitude	125	2.59	0.95
Not adapting to the method of learning organization at university	125	2.20	0.92
Apprehension, fear of mistakes in learning	125	2.33	1.02
Depressed when encountering difficult subjects	125	2.95	0.85
Excessive anxiety about learning	125	2.83	0.97
Timid, shy in studying	125	2.65	0.95
Subjectivity in learning	125	2.16	1.09
Lack of confidence in yourself should not try to study	125	1.99	1.03
Impatience in learning	125	2.78	0.89
Loss of temper when facing difficult learning problems	125	2.42	0.98
Valid N (listwise)	125		

T-test results showed the average value (*Mean*) of the two cognitive aspects, the attitude shows that the psychological difficulty in terms of attitude of Khmer students was actually more than the psychological difficulty in terms of perception with the statistical significance of 95%.

The fact that Khmer students had more and more frequent psychological difficulties, which can be completely explained. Because first-year students are mostly students who have just left high school to enter university. They face lots of differences that need to be adapted and unfavorable learning conditions that need efforts to overcome.

Through the above results, it can be concluded that the Khmer students in the research sample had psychological difficulties in learning activities. These psychological difficulties manifested in both ways: perception and attitude, in which the psychological difficulties manifested in the attitude side because they occur with relatively more frequency.

4.2. Qualitative results

To study the behavior of Khmer students, the author interviewed 10 lecturers of universities in the Mekong Delta, who are directly involved in teaching and assessing student learning activities. Survey results, including Khmer students, showed that the majority of lecturers believed that behavior of Khmer students in relations with lecturers and friends still face many difficulties: reasonable harmonious coordination of attitudes, behaviors, actions, gestures, gestures, speech and behavior of students

who are confused, lack of confidence when solving problems, in group discussions, research learning materials as well as activities for training study skills. They were still passive and behave less flexibly in communication. This was because Khmer students themselves had limitation in language skills, life skills, and communication skills. Some students lacked the ability to self-test, self-regulate, and control behavior, which leads to students not self-assessing their effectiveness so their academic results were low.

The Khmer students' psychological difficulties can also negatively affect their academic performance, learning repetition rate and graduation rate. The high degree of student psychological difficulty was closely related to academic performance. Students with a high degree of psychological difficulty increased their anxiety about exams, their self-study ability, low efficiency of time management and use of resources in study. They were also less persistent when facing difficulties and using effective learning strategies or seeking learning support.

Research results showed that, for Khmer students, difficulties were seen as challenges in life, helping them to be more mature when trying to overcome. However, with many students, the difficulties encountered during college have left a heavy impression on the mind, causing stress, reducing the quality of life, negatively affecting study results and career future later. Thus, the pressures from learning activities caused psychological difficulties for students, on the

contrary, the stress, anxiety, sadness, fatigue caused by psychological difficulties, and made students feel depressed, frustrated and hopeless, which seriously affected students' learning activities, reduces their effectiveness and negatively affects their career future in the future. It can be said that individuals with a high level of psychological difficulty often lack information processing skills - the factor is crucial to their learning performance and success.

5. Conclusions

In summary, in terms of learning activities, the author's research went into deep into the student's psychological field as well as the change of the learning environment from one educational level to another, specifically from educational level from high school to university level, which created psychological difficulties for young people in this period. Study focused on manifestations of psychological difficulties, the causes of psychological difficulties, the effects of psychological difficulties on learning efficiency of students in general, and Khmer students in particular. Therefore, the school needs to have a team of psychologists in supporting and advising in order to improve the classroom and school environment, promote the positive psychological development of students; thereby minimizing and limiting psychological difficulties in the children in the learning process. In addition, psychological difficulties also affected the psychological development and personality of students. Identifying psychological difficulties and the causes leading to psychological difficulties will help students, teachers, school leaders, and policy makers find reasonable solutions.

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