**PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL ADAPTATION OF FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, HUE UNIVERSITY IN THE DIGITAL ERA**

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**ABSTRAST**

This study aims to identify the current state of psychological–social adaptation among first-year students at the University of Education, Hue University, in the context of increasingly profound digital transformation. Using survey questionnaires and interviews, the findings reveal that students' overall level of adaptation is moderate, with notable strengths in emotional positivity, ethical awareness, and friendly attitudes. However, a portion of students still face difficulties in managing negative emotions, establishing deep social relationships, and actively participating in community activities. The study also highlights a strong correlation between psychological and social adaptation, reflecting the systemic nature of the adaptation process within the university environment. Based on these results, the authors propose several support measures, including transitional programs, social skills development, enhancement of academic advising roles, and the application of technology in psychological–social adaptation support.

***Keywords:***psychological-social adaptation, first-year students, digital era, social skills, school psychological support.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Psychological–social adaptation represents a specific form of human adaptation, reflecting the ability of individuals to adjust themselves in accordance with the norms and values of a new environment. Tremblay Monique defines it as the process through which individuals seek to establish a balance between internal impulses and personal desires on the one hand, and the expectations and requirements of society on the other [11]. Similarly, Nguyễn Khắc Viện emphasizes that adaptation is the individual’s capacity to access social values and to integrate effectively into community life [8].

In a broad sense, psychological–social adaptation refers to the process by which individuals appropriately internalize external influences, regulate their emotions and behaviors, and maintain a positive internal state while balancing personal needs with social demands. This enables them to act in accordance with social norms, achieve integration, and sustain development within a social context.

Structurally, psychological–social adaptation comprises two interrelated components:

- *Psychological adaptation,* referring to the capacity to regulate emotions, behaviors, and mental states in order to maintain inner stability under changing conditions;

- *Social adaptation,* referring to the ability to establish and sustain positive social relationships while responding effectively to new social norms and expectations.

This process is inherently dynamic, involving a dialectical interaction between the psychological and social domains. Psychological stability tends to facilitate social integration, while supportive social environments, in turn, reinforce individuals’ psychological well-being.

In the current era of digital transformation in education, the rapid development of digital technologies, online learning platforms, artificial intelligence, and virtual interaction tools has reshaped the ways students learn, communicate, and adapt to university life. First-year students—who are undergoing a critical psychological transition—face distinct challenges, such as adapting to online learning systems (e.g., LMS, Zoom, Google Meet), reduced opportunities for face-to-face social interaction, heightened pressures of self-directed learning, and a weakened sense of connectedness, often accompanied by feelings of isolation in virtual settings. These factors render the adaptation process more multidimensional and complex, requiring students to develop flexible socio-emotional competencies alongside technological adaptability.

Against this backdrop, examining the current state of psychological–social adaptation among first-year students at the University of Education, Hue University is both timely and essential, serving as a foundation for designing practical support measures tailored to the realities of the digital era.

**2. Research content**

**2.1. Research methods**

The study was conducted in 2025. The research sample consisted of 181 first-year students from the University of Education, Hue University. A majority of these students originated from rural and mountainous areas (82.9%), most were female (80.2%), living away from their families, and engaged in diverse social interactions. In order to ensure comprehensiveness and objectivity, the study also collected data from 82 university administrators and lecturers directly involved in teaching or providing support to first-year students.

The criteria for evaluating students’ psychosocial adaptation were based on two core dimensions: (i) psychological adaptation, defined as the ability to regulate emotions and maintain internal stability; and (ii) social adaptation, referring to the ability to integrate into new interpersonal and institutional environments within the university setting. More specifically, psychological adaptation was reflected in students’ tendencies to reinforce positive emotions (e.g., optimism, confidence, life satisfaction), reduce negative emotions (e.g., anxiety, insecurity, irritability), develop self-regulation skills, and sustain emotional equilibrium [6]. Social adaptation, in turn, encompassed active engagement in communication, integration into peer and faculty relationships, compliance with institutional regulations, and participation in extracurricular and community activities [6; 2; 4; 12].

Regarding methodology, the study combined theoretical research, questionnaire survey, and in-depth interviews. The questionnaire was developed based on relevant theoretical frameworks, pre-tested through a pilot phase, and subsequently administered in the official data collection using a four-point Likert scale. The scoring rubric was as follows: for positively worded items—“Always” (4 points), “Often” (3 points), “Occasionally” (2 points), “Never” (1 point); for negatively worded items—“Always” (1 point), “Often” (2 points), “Occasionally” (3 points), “Never” (4 points).

Quantitative data were processed using SPSS 22.0, applying descriptive statistical techniques including frequency distribution, percentage, mean scores, and standard deviations. The classification of psychosocial adaptation levels was determined using the following statistical rule:

- If *X (scale) – 1SD ≤ Mean score ≤ X (scale) + 1SD* → medium level.

- If *1 ≤ Mean score < X (scale) – 1SD* → low level.

- If *X (scale) + 1SD < Mean score ≤ 4* → high level.

Accordingly, the thresholds for classification were established as follows:

- Psychological adaptation: low (1.00–2.51), medium (2.52–3.43), high (3.44–4.00).

- Social adaptation: low (1.00–2.86), medium (2.87–3.62), high (3.63–4.00).

- Overall psychosocial adaptation: low (1.00–2.77), medium (2.78–3.49), high (3.50–4.00).

In addition to the survey, in-depth interviews were conducted with both students and lecturers. These interviews were aimed at clarifying emotional manifestations, identifying difficulties encountered in the adaptation process, exploring underlying influencing factors, and collecting practical recommendations for supportive interventions.

**2.2. Results**

**2.2.1. The current situation of first-year students’ psychosocial adaptation in the digital era**

***Table 1. Self-assessment results of first-year students on the level of psychosocial adaptation***

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Level of adaptation** | **Psychological adaptation** | **Social adaptation** | **Psychological–social adaptation** |
| Quantity | % | Quantity | % | Quantity | % |
| 1 | Low Adaptation | 25 | 13,8 | 29 | 16,0 | 28 | 15,6 |
| 2 | Moderate Adaptation | 132 | 72,9 | 127 | 70,1 | 128 | 70,4 |
| 3 | High Adaptation | 23 | 12,7 | 27 | 14,9 | 25 | 13,8 |
|  | **Total** | **181** | **100** | **181** | **100** | **181** | **100** |

The self-assessment of 181 first-year students indicates that approximately 70% fall within the moderate level of adaptation across all three dimensions: psychological adaptation (72.9%), social adaptation (70.1%), and psycho-social adaptation (70.4%). Only about 13–15% of students achieve a high level of adaptation, while roughly 14–16% remain at a low level, representing a group at higher risk of difficulties in integration and psychological vulnerability.

The predominance of moderate adaptation reflects a state of instability and passivity in the adjustment process—especially as students are simultaneously experiencing a “double shock”: the transition to higher education and the rapid shift toward digital learning environments. Studying primarily through digital platforms, with limited face-to-face interaction and increased self-study pressure, may lead to feelings of disorientation, isolation, and heightened stress compared to traditional learning contexts.

The relatively small proportion of highly adaptive students suggests that only a minority possess strong self-regulation, flexibility, and emotional stability in the digitalized learning environment. Conversely, the low-adaptation group requires particular attention due to their increased risk of anxiety, psychological instability, and difficulty in integrating into virtual learning spaces—where experiences of “invisibility” or lack of connection are common [5]. The digital era has transformed how students experience university life. Adaptation is no longer confined to traditional psychological and social domains, but also extends to technological competence, online interaction, and the ability to maintain mental well-being under conditions of digitalization.

Therefore, the findings from Table 1 serve as an early warning regarding the limited adaptation capacity of first-year students in the digital context. Universities should implement comprehensive strategies, including digital and socio-emotional skills training, enhanced online–offline interaction, academic advising, and especially early support systems for students at risk of poor integration and psychological vulnerability. Strengthening students’ psycho-social adaptability in the digital era must be regarded as a strategic priority to ensure not only academic effectiveness but also sustainable psychological and social development.

**2.2.2. The current state of first-year students’ psychological adaptation in the digital era**

**2.2.2.1. First-year students’ self-assessment of the level of psychological adaptation**

The data presented in Table 2 reflect the level of psychological adaptation among first-year students at Hue University of Education, as evidenced through specific manifestations. The assessment across multiple emotional and psychological dimensions provides a multidimensional picture of students’ ability to self-regulate emotions, maintain inner stability, and sustain motivation during the process of adapting to the university environment.

**Table 2. First-year students’ self-assessment of psychological adaptation levels**

| **No**. | **Assessment content** | **Self-assessed level (%)** | **Mean** | **SD** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| OF | QF | ST | NV |
| 1 | I feel safe | 43,1 | 34,8 | 19,3 | 2,8 | 3,2 | 0,8 |
| 2 | I feel cheerful | 34,3 | 42,5 | 22,1 | 1,1 | 3,1 | 0,8 |
| 3 | I feel happy | 35,4 | 32,0 | 30,9 | 1,7 | 3,0 | 0,9 |
| 4 | I trust people around me | 16,6 | 38,1 | 36,5 | 8,8 | 2,6 | 0,9 |
| 5 | feel psychologically balanced | 18,8 | 40,9 | 34,3 | 6,1 | 2,7 | 0,8 |
| 6 | T I always have the aspiration to strive forward | 48,1 | 34,3 | 16,6 | 1,1 | 3,3 | 0,8 |
| 7 | I feel lonely | 10,5 | 16,6 | 58,6 | 14,4 | 2,8 | 0,8 |
| 8 | I feel disappointed | 9,4 | 17,7 | 62,4 | 10,5 | 2,7 | 0,8 |
| 9 | I feel insecure | 8,3 | 16,6 | 56,4 | 18,8 | 2,9 | 0,8 |
| 10 | I always enjoy learning, social, and recreational activities | 39,2 | 40,9 | 17,1 | 2,8 | 3,2 | 0,9 |
| 11 | I feel anxious when interacting with others | 13,8 | 23,8 | 44,8 | 17,7 | 2,7 | 0,9 |
| 12 | I feel self-disgust | 9,4 | 9,9 | 39,2 | 41,4 | 3,1 | 0,8 |
| 13 | I feel uncomfortable | 8,8 | 16,0 | 61,9 | 13,3 | 2,8 | 0,8 |
| 14 | I love myself | 46,4 | 16,0% | 61,9% | 13,3% | 3,2 | 0,9 |
| 15 | I get angry without cause | 8,3 | 32,0 | 18,2 | 3,3 | 2,9 | 0,8 |
| 16 | I love life | 49,2 | 15,5 | 58,0 | 18,2 | 3,3 | 0,8 |
| 17 | I feel confident and full of energy | 28,2 | 37,6 | 11,0 | 2,2 | 3,0 | 0,8 |
|  | **Overall mean** |  |  |  |  | **2,97** | **0,46** |

**Notes**: *OF = Often; QF = Quite frequently; ST = Sometimes; NV = Never; Mean score (1 ≤ Mean ≤ 4); SD = Standard deviation.*

The survey results presented in Table 2 indicate that the majority of first-year students self-assessed their level of psychological adaptation at a moderate level (72.9%), reflecting a relatively stable yet not fully solid state of emotional and mental well-being. This is a common phenomenon among students in the transitional stage from high school to university - an age period that Erikson described as turbulent, marked by identity crises and emotional differentiation [5].

However, when placed in the context of the digital era, where students increasingly study and engage in daily activities on online platforms, psychological adaptation needs to be understood in a new dimension - adaptation to the pressures of digitalization.

Conversations with several faculty members from the Department of Psychology and Education who are directly teaching first-year students revealed that the rapid development of digital technologies has significantly transformed students’ learning modes. Learning—particularly self-directed learning—tends to increase considerably, while face-to-face class time is reduced. Online learning platforms, non-face-to-face communication, and high requirements for autonomous learning have led many students to feel a lack of real interaction, easily falling into states of social isolation. Consequently, a proportion of students experience feelings of insecurity, anxiety, and diminished self-confidence as they attempt to adapt to the new learning environment.

The high mean scores in positive indicators such as “loving life,” “aspiration to strive,” “self-love,” and “feeling safe” demonstrate that students still maintain intrinsic motivation and a positive self-perception during the adaptation process. Nevertheless, the notable presence of negative emotions such as “anxiety in communication,” “psychological imbalance,” “loneliness,” and “distrust of others” reflects the underlying psychological pressures, particularly in the digital environment, where emotional expression and interpersonal connection are constrained.

In this context, the development of socio-emotional competencies and the creation of a supportive and connected digital learning environment are essential. Without appropriate support, the group of students with low adaptation levels (13.7%) is at risk of falling into disorientation, declining mental health, and withdrawal from learning activities.

**2.2.2.2. Evaluations by administrators and lecturers on the psychological adaptation of first-year students**

***Table 3. Evaluations of administrators and lecturers on the psychological adaptation of first-year students***

| **No**. | **Evaluation criteria** | **Extent of evaluation (%)** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **All students** | **Majority of students** | **A subgroup of students** | **Very few students** |
| 1 | Displaying positive emotions (optimistic, confident, cheerful, etc.) | 6,1 | 69,5 | 24,4 | 0 |
| 2 | Displaying negative emotions (anxious, insecure, irritable, etc.) | 4,9 | 23,1 | 42,7 | 29,3 |
| 3 | Increasing tendency toward positive emotions | 13,4 | 61,0 | 20,7 | 4,9 |
| 4 | Increasing tendency toward negative emotions | 0 | 18,4 | 57,3 | 22,3 |
| 5 | Ability to self-regulate emotions | 14,6 | 40,2 | 24,4 | 20,7 |
| 6 | Stable inner state | 18,3 | 26,8 | 37,8 | 17,1 |
| 7 | Full of vitality in daily life | 7,3 | 48,8 | 39,0 | 4,9 |

The evaluation results from 82 administrators and lecturers presented in Table 3 indicate that the majority of first-year students exhibit a fairly positive psychological profile, with 75.6% being described as optimistic, confident, and cheerful, and 74.4% showing a tendency toward increased positive emotions. This is a promising signal, suggesting that a foundation of positive emotions has begun to take shape—an essential factor supporting students’ stability during the transition period. However, when considered within the context of digital transformation, these manifestations require more careful examination.

The contemporary university environment is no longer confined to a traditional academic space but is rapidly shifting toward multi-platform learning, online communication, and comprehensive digitalization. This transition intensifies pressures on students’ emotional self-regulation, social connectedness, and mental well-being. Notably, nearly 72% of students were still reported to experience negative emotions at varying levels, such as anxiety, insecurity, and irritability. These are common in digitalized learning environments, where students often must self-direct their learning, cope with time pressure and heavy workloads, and face reduced face-to-face interaction—factors that are crucial for emotional development in early adulthood.

Emotional self-regulation—considered a core competence of psychological adaptation—was assessed at a relatively high level in just over half of the students (54.8%). While already a challenge in traditional learning contexts, this requirement becomes even more demanding in digital learning environments. Self-regulation now entails: managing emotions during prolonged online learning, coping with feelings of isolation in virtual spaces, and sustaining motivation in the absence of direct supervision.

Indicators of inner stability and positive life energy also warrant attention: only 45.1% of students were evaluated as emotionally stable, and 56.1% as full of vitality. In the digital era, students are particularly vulnerable to superficial learning, passivity, or information overload, which can gradually erode their enthusiasm and weaken their connection to both academic goals and social relationships.

In summary, although first-year students have begun to develop a positive mindset within the new learning environment, many unstable psychological manifestations remain, with the risk of being amplified in the context of digitalization. In particular, negative emotions, limited emotional self-regulation, and fluctuating inner states are typical indicators of incomplete adaptation to a technology-driven academic environment. Therefore, in the digital era, supporting students requires going beyond academic assistance to the development of integrated socio-emotional skills programs that align with technological contexts.

**2.2.3. The current status of first-year students’ social adaptation in the digital era**

**2.2.3.1. Self-assessment of social adaptation among first-year students**

***Table 4. Self-assessment results of first-year students on their level of social adaptation***

| **No.** | **Evaluation Content** | **Self-assessment level (%)** | **Mean** | **SD** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Always | Often | Sometimes | Never |
| 1 | I help my friends in study as well as in life | 30,4 | 49,2 | 18,8 | 1,7 | 3,1 | 0,7 |
| 2 | I respect my friends | 66,3 | 28,7 | 3,9 | 1,1 | 3,6 | 0,6 |
| 3 | I love my friends | 60,8 | 33,1 | 5,5 | 0,6 | 3,5 | 0,6 |
| 4 | I share my difficulties with friends | 30,4 | 27,6 | 32,0 | 9,9 | 2,8 | 1,0 |
| 5 | I am proactive and positive in communicating with friends | 33,7 | 39,2 | 23,8 | 3,3 | 3,0 | 0,8 |
| 6 | I am not indifferent to my friends’ difficulties | 45,3 | 41,4 | 8,3 | 5,0 | 3,3 | 0,8 |
| 7 | I get along well with friends | 49,7 | 42,5 | 6,6 | 1,1 | 3,4 | 0,7 |
| 8 | I have close friends/a close group of friends | 45,9 | 34,3 | 16,6 | 3,3 | 3,2 | 0,8 |
| 9 | I actively participate in social activities with friends | 38,7 | 33,7 | 24,3 | 3,3 | 3,1 | 0,9 |
| 10 | I actively ask teachers questions when I do not understand something | 19,3 | 29,3 | 42,0 | 9,4 | 2,6 | 0,9 |
| 11 | I express my opinions to teachers | 20,4 | 22,1 | 45,3 | 12,2 | 2,5 | 1,0 |
| 12 | I share my difficulties with teachers | 14,9 | 16,6 | 44,8 | 23,8 | 2,2 | 1,0 |
| 13 | I take the initiative to communicate with teachers | 18,2 | 23,2 | 45,3 | 13,3 | 2,5 | 0,9 |
| 14 | I respect my teachers | 80,7 | 14,9 | 3,3 | 1,1 | 3,8 | 0,6 |
| 15 | I love my teachers | 77,9 | 19,3 | 2,2 | 0,6 | 3,7 | 0,5 |
| 16 | I do not feel distant from my teachers | 37,0 | 34,3 | 26,0 | 2,8 | 3,2 | 0,9 |
| 17 | I often avoid my teachers when I meet them | 10,5 | 12,2 | 26,5 | 50,8 | 2,8 | 1,0 |
| 18 | I feel shy when communicating with teachers | 10,5 | 18,2 | 51,4 | 19,9 | 3,7 | 0,9 |
| 19 | I cheat by copying or using materials during exams | 5,0 | 6,1 | 6,6 | 82,3 | 3,7 | 0,8 |
| 20 | I ask someone to take an exam for me | 5,5 | 5,5 | 3,3 | 85,6 | 3,0 | 0,8 |
| 21 | I actively participate in cultural, artistic, and sports activities of the Faculty/University | 38,7 | 27,6 | 29,8 | 3,9 | 3,7 | 0,9 |
| 22 | I use, store, or trade harmful substances (drugs, heroin, etc.) or weapons at school | 5,0 | 4,4 | 3,9 | 86,7 | 3,7 | 0,8 |
| 23 | I commit violent acts against others at school | 5,5 | 3,9 | 3,9 | 86,7 | 3,7 | 0,8 |
| 24 | I steal school facilities or equipment | 3,9 | 5,0 | 3,9 | 87,3 | 3,7 | 0,7 |
| 25 | I intentionally damage school infrastructure or property | 3,9 | 5,0 | 3,9 | 87,3 | 3,7 | 0,7 |
| 26 | I steal belongings of others at school | 3,9 | 4,4 | 4,4 | 87,3 | 3,8 | 0,8 |
| 27 | I actively participate in volunteer activities (supporting flood victims, blood donation, etc. at the Faculty/University) | 36,5 | 32,0 | 25,4 | 6,1 | 3,0 | 0,9 |
| **Overall Mean** |  |  |  |  | **3,24** | **0,38** |

***Notes****: Mean (1 ≤ Mean ≤ 4); SD = Standard Deviation.*

The statistical results presented in Table 4 provide a detailed reflection of the level of social adaptation among first-year students at Hue University of Education through various specific indicators, focusing on two main aspects: peer-teacher relationships and social behavior within the school environment. The survey results from students, together with the evaluations of administrators and lecturers, indicate that the overall level of social adaptation of first-year students at Hue University of Education is relatively good (overall mean score = 3.24/4), with the most prominent feature being a strong sense of morality and discipline in the academic setting. However, within the context of the digital era, certain limitations in communication, sharing, and participation in social activities need to be reconsidered in light of the broader socio-technological environment that is significantly transforming human behavior.

*- Friendly but superficial social relationships under the influence of digitalization:* The data show that first-year students display positive attitudes toward peers and lecturers, such as affection, respect, and sociability (mean scores ranging from 3.4–3.8). However, their ability to engage in proactive communication, express emotions, or share difficulties remains limited - an increasingly common characteristic among students who have grown up in an environment shaped by social media, short messaging, and indirect communication. While digital platforms enable students to connect quickly, they also generate an “emotional distance” in real-life relationships. A tendency toward self-defense, reluctance to share, or even dependence on technology in maintaining relationships prevents many students from building deeper social connections, especially with lecturers - who play an essential role in providing orientation and support in both academic and personal life.

- *Communication with lecturers: The impact of digital culture and traditional educational patterns:* Mean scores of only 2.5–2.6 for indicators such as “proactively communicating,” “sharing difficulties,” or “expressing opinions to lecturers” reveal that passive communication remains prevalent. In the context of digital education, while students can reach out to lecturers via email or learning management systems (LMS), the lack of face-to-face interaction, combined with a traditional education culture that emphasizes hierarchy, makes them hesitant or feel unnecessary to engage in deeper communication. This demonstrates that digital transformation in education has not yet gone hand in hand with a cultural transformation of interaction. If the application of technology is not accompanied by the development of social communication skills, students may increasingly rely on indirect forms of connection, thereby weakening their initiative in real-life social relationships.

- *High sense of discipline but limited social proactivity - a consequence of a passive, digitalized learning environment:* Students are highly rated in terms of compliance with regulations and personal ethics (with mean scores ranging from 3.7–3.8), indicating that social awareness and appropriate behavioral attitudes are still maintained within the school setting. However, their participation in collective, volunteer, or cultural exchange activities remains modest. This reflects a form of “passive” adaptation - compliance without truly engaging in the social environment of university life, which requires interaction, collaboration, creativity, and contribution. In the digital environment, students can easily confine themselves within a “personal bubble” of online classes, personalized social networks, and limited real-life contact. This may reduce their motivation to engage in communities and diminish group collaboration skills - competencies that are critically important in the digital age.

In conclusion, the survey results show that although first-year students have established a solid foundation in terms of moral awareness and positive attitudes, they lack depth in social communication and initiative in community engagement - an indication of incomplete social adaptation within the digitalized university environment.

**2.2.3.2. Evaluation of administrators and lecturers on the level of social adaptation of first-year students**

A survey of 82 administrators and lecturers provides an overview of the level of social adaptation of first-year students in the digital era from the perspective of those who teach and manage them. The survey results are presented in **Table 5**.

**Table 5. Evaluation of administrators and lecturers on the level of social adaptation of first-year students**

| **No.** | **Indicators** | **Level of manifestation (%)** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| All Students | Majority of Students | A Subgroup of Students | Very Few Students |
| 1 | Getting along well with peers | 11,0 | 48,8 | 40,2 | 0 |
| 2 | Having a positive attitude toward peers (loving, respecting friends, etc.) | 3,7 | 57,3 | 39,0 | 0 |
| 3 | Being proactive and positive in communicating with peers | 2,4 | 34,1 | 48,8 | 15.0 |
| 4 | Sharing difficulties with peers | 0 | 19.5 | 46,3 | 34,2 |
| 5 | Having friends/a peer group | 6,1 | 43,9 | 40,2 | 9.8 |
| 6 | Proactively participating in activities with peers | 4,9 | 30,5 | 54,9 | 9,7 |
| 7 | Having a positive attitude toward teachers (respecting, appreciating, not feeling distant, etc.) | 9,8 | 42,3 | 47,9 | 0 |
| 8 | Proactively expressing personal opinions to teachers | 1,2 | 24,4 | 46.3 | 28,1 |
| 9 | Proactively communicating or sharing personal issues and difficulties with teachers | 0 | 7,3 | 48,8 | 43,9 |
| 10 | Actively participating in collective activities  | 0 | 18,3 | 63,4 | 18,3 |
| 11 | Not violating school rules and regulations  | 9,8 | 29,3 | 51,2 | 9,7 |

**The survey results in Table 5 indicate that first-year students at Hue University of Education generally exhibit a medium to fairly good level of social adaptation, with prominent manifestations such as friendliness and respect for regulations. However, limitations remain in proactive communication, sharing difficulties, and participating in social activities. According to Nguyen Cong Khanh (2020), social behaviors such as sharing and effective communication only truly develop when individuals feel safe and accepted within a collective [7]. Placed in the context of the digital era, these limitations can be explained from several perspectives.**

***First, superficial communication – a consequence of the virtual interaction environment:***
The high rate of students displaying friendliness toward peers (nearly 60%) shows that the social surface of students is relatively stable. However, indicators such as proactive communication (only 2.4%) and sharing difficulties with friends (0% “entirely,” 34.2% “very little”) clearly reflect the state of superficial, shallow social interaction. This may result from the habit of indirect interaction through digital platforms such as social networks, instant messaging, and learning applications, where connections tend to be short-term, fast, but emotionally detached. In a digitized environment, students are prone to the state of being “connected but isolated” – a phenomenon highlighted in many studies on Generation Z, in which students may have hundreds of online friends but no truly close person to share with when facing difficulties.

***Second, asymmetry in digital education culture – the teacher–student relationship has not been restructured:*** Although more than 50% of administrators and lecturers evaluated students as having a positive attitude toward instructors, the proportion of those who proactively communicate, express opinions, or share difficulties with teachers remains very low (only 1.2–7.3% at the “entirely” and “mostly” levels). This not only reflects the influence of traditional school culture but also stems from the asymmetric communication model prevalent in online learning platforms. These results reveal that passive communication patterns remain common among students, especially in power–role relationships such as between teachers and students. This originates from traditional educational culture, where teachers are regarded as the central authority, and students are passive recipients [9; 10]. In online classes, discussion forums, or LMS systems, communication is often one-way, with students passively receiving rather than actively responding. The lack of real-life communication prevents students from developing in-depth communication competence – a core element of social adaptation in higher education.

***Third, signs of passive adaptation:*** The high level of compliance with regulations (nearly 40% of students reported no violations) is a positive indicator showing that students maintain good discipline, consistent with social requirements. However, only 18.3% of students were assessed as actively participating in collective activities, while the majority participated passively or rarely. This is a sign of passive adaptation – following norms but without demonstrating genuine engagement or social involvement. This passivity may be understood as a consequence of reduced opportunities for real-world experiences due to the digitalization of learning and management activities, along with the lack of models encouraging students to take initiative in expressing themselves within the academic community. While online learning platforms enhance individual flexibility, they may also reduce community cohesion – a crucial factor in the development and consolidation of social competence.

***– Communication and sharing – the bottleneck of social adaptation in the digital age:*** The low indicators related to communication and sharing with peers and instructors clearly reflect limitations in practical social skills within the rapidly advancing technological context. Although students have early access to technology, not all are guided on how to build healthy social relationships in the digital environment. Many students do not know how to express emotions, articulate opinions confidently, or recognize the role of open communication in maintaining social support.

**From these findings, it can be concluded that first-year students are in the process of forming social adaptation skills but remain significantly influenced by the negative impacts of a digitalized learning and living environment. The lack of proactivity, minimal face-to-face communication, and reluctance to share are typical manifestations of “**soft social impairment**” in the digital era – a new concept increasingly discussed by psychology and education experts.**

**2.2.4. The correlation between aspects of psychological–social adaptation among first-year students at the university of Education, Hue university in the digital era**

Examining the correlation between the two aspects of psychological–social adaptation among first-year students helps determine the degree of interaction between psychological and social factors in the adaptation process. This serves as a foundation for developing comprehensive psychological–social support programs for students during the digital transformation period.

***Table 6: Results of correlation assessment between aspects of psychological–social adaptation of first-year students***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Psychological adaptation** | **Social adaptation** |
| R | P | r | p |
| Psychological adaptation |  |  | 0,505 | **0,00** |
| Social adaptation | 0,829 | **0,00** | 0,902 | **0,00** |

***Note:***r *is the Pearson correlation coefficient;* p *is the significance level.*

Statistical data in Table 6 indicate a strong, statistically significant positive correlation between the two main components of first-year students’ psychosocial adaptation. Specifically, the Pearson correlation coefficient of r = 0.829 (p = 0.00) between psychological adaptation and social adaptation reflects a close association: students who demonstrate strong social adaptability also tend to achieve higher levels of psychological adaptation, and vice versa.

In the digital era, this relationship becomes even more pronounced: students’ social connections are no longer confined to face-to-face interactions but extend to digital platforms - ranging from online study groups and academic social networks to learning management systems (LMS). Building and maintaining positive social relationships on such platforms significantly influence students’ moods, emotions, and psychological stability.

Notably, the structural components of social adaptation (r = 0.902) exhibit stronger internal correlations than those of psychological adaptation (r = 0.505). This outcome can be explained by the transitional nature of first-year students’ experiences: they often rely on social relationships—both direct and digital—to establish a sense of belonging and receive emotional support, which in turn indirectly facilitates self-regulation of emotions and behavior.

From a developmental perspective, the theories of Erikson (1963) and Bronfenbrenner (1979) both underscore the pivotal role of the social environment in shaping personal identity and ensuring psychological stability during emerging adulthood. In the contemporary context, this environment also encompasses the “digital space,” where virtual connections can create real experiences with either positive or negative impacts on individual psychology [5; 3].

In summary, the interaction between psychological and social dimensions of adaptation among first-year students is not merely bidirectional but constitutes the product of an expanded ecosystem—including online environments. These findings provide the foundation for designing integrated support programs that combine individual psychological counseling, social skills development, and guidance on the healthy use of digital technologies, tailored to the characteristics of students in the age of digital transformation.

**2.2.5. Recommendations for enhancing first-Year students’ psychosocial adaptation in the digital era**

Within the context of digital transformation in education, psychosocial adaptation entails more than emotional stability and social connectedness; it also requires students to be flexible and proactive in navigating multi-platform learning environments characterized by diverse connections and limited direct interaction. Survey results reveal that most first-year students demonstrate an average level of adaptation, while some encounter difficulties in emotion regulation, social relationship-building, and active participation in campus activities - particularly as academic and social interactions increasingly occur through technological platforms.

Based on these findings, the research team proposes several systemic measures to enhance first-year students’ psychosocial adaptation in the digital era:

***(1) Designing psychological support and digital transition programs from the outset of the academic year:*** Develop a “Digital Welcome for Freshmen” program that integrates psychological orientation, life-skills training, familiarization with LMS platforms, and guidance on academic regulations and digital support systems. Early and comprehensive implementation will help students reduce anxiety, build confidence, and proactively integrate into university life.

***(2) Strengthening the role of academic advisors and online psychological support services:*** Advisors should be equipped with basic counseling skills to recognize early signs of maladaptation, both through direct interactions and digital signals. In addition to face-to-face services, institutions should establish online counseling platforms to provide students with accessible psychological support, particularly for those reluctant to share in person.

***(3) Organizing technology-integrated social skills training activities:*** Through soft skills clubs, peer-learning forums, and online workshops on communication, emotion regulation, and teamwork in both physical and digital settings, students can cultivate competencies essential for academic and social contexts. Delivering these activities partly online also broadens accessibility and reduces psychological barriers.

***(4) Leveraging digital technologies to foster a positive campus culture:*** A digital campus environment should emphasize respect, empathy, support, and positive student–faculty interactions. Communication, recognition, and incentives for student engagement should also be digitized—for example, via electronic honor boards, digital achievement badges, or performance-based reward systems within the student digital ecosystem.

***(5)Applying technology for monitoring and feedback on adaptation processes:*** Regular online surveys assessing emotions, academic stress, and social connectedness can enable timely detection of problems. Rapid feedback mechanisms between students and relevant units (student affairs office, faculties, academic advisors) are key to enhancing responsiveness and support effectiveness.

These measures should be implemented in a coordinated manner, integrating efforts across functional departments, faculties, student organizations, and the students themselves. More importantly, they should be situated within a learner-centered digital transformation ecosystem to foster a flexible, adaptive, and supportive academic–social environment. Such an approach will enable first-year students to successfully navigate the transitional stage and achieve holistic development in both personal identity and social competencies in the 21st century.

**3. Conclusion**

This study has clarified the current status of psychosocial adaptation among first-year students at Hue University of Education within the broader context of higher education’s rapid transformation under the impact of digitalization. The findings indicate that the majority of first-year students demonstrate an average level of adaptation, with a small proportion showing good adaptation, while a considerable number encounter difficulties—particularly in managing negative emotions, establishing deep social relationships, and actively engaging in academic and extracurricular activities.

The correlation analysis reveals a close relationship between psychological and social adaptation, reflecting the strong interconnection between individual and environmental factors in the process by which students regulate their emotions and behaviors upon entering university. These results emphasize that the development of adaptive capacity cannot be separated from the interplay between personal resources and external support - especially in the digital era, where relationships, interactions, and learning–social activities increasingly take place on technological platforms.

In the context of comprehensive digital transformation in higher education, psychosocial adaptability has become more essential than ever. The ability to regulate emotions in flexible learning environments, digital communication and collaboration skills, as well as proactive and responsible attitudes toward academic activities are core competencies that need to be systematically cultivated from the outset. Therefore, designing structured, strategic, and technology-integrated psychosocial support programs will not only help students overcome transitional challenges but also provide a solid foundation for holistic personal development, enhanced learning capacity, and long-term adaptability in the face of continuous academic and professional changes.

Promoting the psychosocial adaptability of first-year students should be regarded as a collective responsibility of the entire higher education ecosystem—including universities, lecturers, academic advisors, families, and communities—in order to accompany students on their journey of growth and positive integration in the digital age.

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**THÍCH ỨNG TÂM LÝ – XÃ HỘI CỦA SINH VIÊN NĂM THỨ NHẤT TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC SƯ PHẠM, ĐẠI HỌC HUẾ TRONG KỶ NGUYÊN SỐ**

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**TÓM TẮT**

Nghiên cứu này nhằm xác định thực trạng thích ứng tâm lý – xã hội của sinh viên năm thứ nhất Trường Đại học Sư phạm, Đại học Huế trong bối cảnh chuyển đổi số ngày càng sâu rộng. Với phương pháp khảo sát bằng bảng hỏi và phỏng vấn, kết quả cho thấy mức độ thích ứng của sinh viên nhìn chung ở mức trung bình, nổi bật là sự tích cực trong cảm xúc, ý thức đạo đức và thái độ thân thiện. Tuy nhiên, một bộ phận sinh viên còn gặp khó khăn trong việc điều chỉnh cảm xúc tiêu cực, thiết lập mối quan hệ xã hội sâu sắc và chủ động tham gia các hoạt động cộng đồng. Nghiên cứu cũng chỉ ra mối tương quan chặt chẽ giữa thích ứng tâm lý và thích ứng xã hội, phản ánh tính hệ thống của quá trình thích ứng trong môi trường đại học. Từ kết quả này, nhóm tác giả đề xuất các biện pháp hỗ trợ quá trình chuyển tiếp, phát triển kỹ năng xã hội, nâng cao vai trò của cố vấn học tập và ứng dụng công nghệ trong hỗ trợ thích ứng tâm lý – xã hội.

**Từ khóa:** thích ứng tâm lý – xã hội, sinh viên năm thứ nhất, kỷ nguyên số, kỹ năng xã hội, hỗ trợ tâm lý học đường.

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