



## **Stress Levels And Ways Of Dealing With Stress Of High School Students in Hanoi, Vietnam**

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### **Abstract**

To find out factors causing stress for high school students in Hanoi, we conducted a survey using questionnaires based on a DASS 21 scale with 233 students and in-depth interviews with 5 students, 10 teachers and 10 parents at 3 high schools. Survey results show that: (1) up to 38.2% of students experience stress from severe to very severe levels. (2) The level of severe stress appears more in grade 11 than in grade 10 and (3) female students are more stressed than male students. (4) The higher the student's academic performance get, the more severe the stress situation is. (5) Only 11.2% of high school students consider themselves to have little or no knowledge of stress. (6) High school students tend to deal with stress in the way focusing on actions and emotions and less focus on thinking which are positive and proactive responses. From this result, some recommendations in terms of students, teachers, and parents have been made to help students cope with stress.

**Keywords:** Stress, High school students, Ways of dealing with stress



## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Rationale

It is obvious that stress affects the health of the whole body such as the heart, brain, and lungs as well as causing insomnia, memory loss, high blood pressure, obesity, muscular tension, fatigue. So, over the years, the study of stress has attracted a lot of attention from many researchers both theoretically and practically. Experts cited data from the World Health Organization (WHO) that, by 2020, depression is the second disease that is likely to attack human health (after cardiovascular disease only). According to the World Health Organization, around 200 million people in the world (accounting for nearly 5.0% of the population) have typical depressive symptoms. Particularly in Vietnam, the proportion of people with depression is from 8% to 29% (UNICEF, 2019) and Vietnam has about 2,000,000 children who need mentality treatment (Dang Hoang Minh, 2019). Students in Vietnam with high pressure from studying, the proportion of students suffer stress is increasing. A survey of 1114 students in grade 10,11,12 in Ho Chi Minh city show that the stress rate of students accounts for more than 35.1%; anxiety is 59% and depression is 38.7% (Thai Thanh Truc et al, 2018). High school students are a group of students who are under a lot of stress due to the large volume of learning and culture in Vietnam where studying for a good university is a must and parents have high expectation for the academic performances of their children.

However, the study of the stress level of high school students in Hanoi has not been focused. Based on these practical foundations, the research team selected the topic **"Stress levels and ways of dealing with stress of high school students in Hanoi, Vietnam"** with the aim to improve people understanding of the situation about stress among high school students, give recommendation to help student to cope with stress.

### 1.2 Literature reviews

In 2012, the author Ngo Hoang Anh, Vu Ngoc Duy, and Nguyen Thi My Trang launched a study on "The level of stress expression of students from Pedagogical University - Da Nang University". The research team collected information based on 200 students. From there, the authors concluded that the proportion of students with manifestations of stress was the majority with 96%. 21.07% of students agreed that the main causes of stress were tests, exams, and final grades, 15.59% of students thought that money was the main cause. To cope with stress 10.89% of students chose to confide their problem to friends, 10.08% of students chose to play games, listen to music, etc. However, solutions such as sleeping at home, smoking, smashing, playing cards, walking, etc. were also selected by many students. This research had some limitations because the sample was quite small and the study only focused on interviews, multiple-choice tests for students instead of interviewing other related subjects such as parents, teachers.

In 2016, the topic of "The current situation and measures to handle stress in learning of grade 12 students from Dong Ha high school - Quang Tri" was conducted by Do Thi Thanh based on a sample of 92 grade 12 students. The study showed that the majority of students who were in the



state of acute stress that could be controlled were 69.6% and there were up to 30.4% of students in the level of beginning to incompetently control and overload due to stress. There are 8 factors causing stress: (1) Lots of difficult knowledge, (2) Taking exams and taking tests a lot, (3) Class schedule is dense, (4) Low score, (5) Relationship with friends, (6) Relationship with teachers, (7) Relationship with relatives, (8) Setting too high expectation compared to their actual capacity. In addition, some solutions to help students reduce stress in learning were also mentioned by the author, such as For students, they need (1) Have a scientific and proper method of learning from the outset, (2) Enhance class, sports and arts activities, (3) Participate in healthy relationships, (4) Create joy in learning. For teachers, it is necessary to (1) Coordinate many different positive teaching methods, (2) Consolidate and review regularly as well as summarize the basic knowledge, (3) Have important pedagogical skills as well as grasp the learning situation of students, (4) Encourage the students in difficult circumstances to know how to try harder in learning. For the school, it is necessary to have support as well as social cooperation to find scholarships for students. However, the research was based on a relatively small sample size, exploited only some aspects of the impact of stress on students and didn't devise many practical solutions to overcome this situation.

In 2017, "The situation of stress, anxiety, depression and related factors in bachelor students from public health University in 2017- Study with DASS 21" was the topic conducted by Nguyen Thanh Chung, based on a research sample of 626 students. The author concluded that: the rate of students experiencing stress, anxiety, and depression was 34.4%; 42% and 35%, respectively. The groups of factors that were relevant and affecting students' stress, anxiety and depression are : (1) Individual, (2) Family, (3) Study and (4) Society. The author had proposed a number of methods to help students overcome stress, anxiety, and depression such as students should (1) Learn the methods of making study plans, (2) Communicate with experienced people such as lecturers in order to have an appropriate learning plan and orientation, (3) Proactively understand ways of identification and measures to deal with mental health issues, (4) Proactively explore skills to recognize and control emotions of yourself and people around. For parents, they need to equip themselves with the skills to recognize and control emotions of themselves and their children. However, the research had some limitations when it didn't mention measures to deal with the stress, anxiety, and depression that students were currently using. Therefore, recommendations for students and parents were not specific and appropriate. Also, the study only used the questionnaire method so the data lacked abundance and diversity.

"The situation of the stress level in learning for grade 12 students in Da Nang" is the research topic of two authors Nguyen Thi Hang Phuong and Dinh Xuan Lam published in the educational magazine in 2019. Research shows that based on 786 students of grade 12 coming from 4 high schools in Da Nang, female students are more likely to be stressed than male students (61.6% compared to 38.4%) and students especially those who have average academic results have stress level of 53.7%. The author has identified 6 main causes of stress: (1) Worry about the upcoming National High School Exam, (2) Class schedule is dense, (3) Lots of knowledge, (4) Expectations



from parents, (5) Conflict with parents, (6) Teachers are biased. Also, the study presents 5 solutions to reduce stress for students: (1) Self-motivation, (2) Parents should take care of their children's emotions, (3) Develop a reasonable, scientific timetable, (4) Meet the psychologist And (5) Conduct group activities. In particular, the measure chosen by most students is "Self-motivation for themselves" with 48.3%. However, the causes of stress for students are still limited and lack diversity. Moreover, the actual situation of students' awareness of stress and parent's understanding of stress were not considered in this study.

In 2019, by using the questionnaire and interviewing 708 students of 6 high schools in Ninh Binh and Hanoi, Tran Thi My Luong and colleagues conducted a research "The situation of depression in high school students: A study in Ninh Binh province and Hanoi city". Depression level of students is based on many different factors that can be mentioned such as gender, grade, academic performance, etc. The study showed that: (1) comparing the level of depression in boys and girls, male students have a higher level of depression than that of girls, (2) 20.1% of students who show signs of depression are not serious, (3) Student's depression across grade levels shows that depression levels increase with the school year, the highest number of students feeling depressed is in grade 12 (Mean =1.6), and (4) comparing depression levels according to students' school performance, students who have average and weak learning outcomes are most likely to have depression. Based on Beck's scale, the author shows that students express mostly through cognition (Mean = 1.16) and emotion (Mean = 0.85), behavior (Mean = 0.84), and finally physiological (Mean = 0.73). However, the study did not mention how to help high school students reduce or prevent depression. Moreover, the research is quite limited in interviewing parents and schools.

In general, previous studies have rarely assessed the current state of stress of high school students based on different kinds of perspectives for example, from the perspective of parents and teachers as well as have not yet provided concrete, practical solutions for teachers, parents, and students who are affected by stress. Hence, the research project "**Stress levels and ways of dealing with stress of high school students in Hanoi, Vietnam**" will focus on analyzing the stress situation of high school students and the measures to cope with stress.

### 1.3 Objectives of the study

This research project has the following basic objectives: (1) Summarizing theory to build a theoretical model of ways to deal with for high school students. (2) Assess the stress level of Hanoi high school students. (3) Find out the ways of dealing with the stress of high school students in Hanoi.

### 1.4 Theory

Stress is a term first used in physics to indicate the compressive strength that a material has to endure. By the 17th century, stress was a certain pressure or intrusion impacting on a person and then causing stress. Also, stress can be viewed from three different perspectives. (1) The perspective of approaching stress from the external environment is an environmental requirement that causes an individual to challenge potentials (Holroyd, 1979). (2) The perspective of

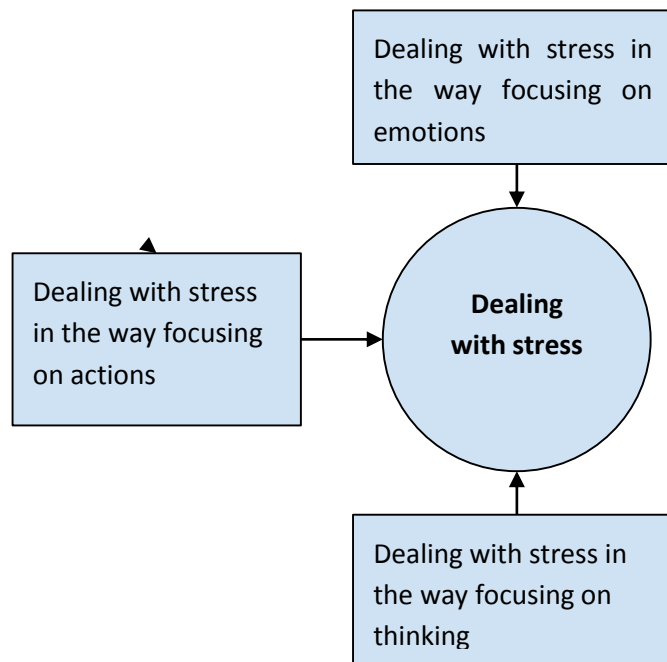
approaching stress as an internal response: Hans Selye (1956) formulated a concept of "biological stress symptom" which is the correlation between stimulation and reaction of the body. (3) The perspective of approaching stress as an interaction: According to Lazarus (1993), stress is a state of negative emotions that appears to respond to events that require effort.

There are two ways to classify stress based on effects and subjects. First, stress was classified by effects: (1) Positive stress (Eustress) appears as soon as you need to use your physical strength. (2) Negative stress (Distress) is one of the types of stress that the mind and body suffer when normal habits have to change and adjust. Second, stress was classified by objects: (1) Stress in puberty means pressures on oneself, study, family, friends ... (2) Occupational stress is an imbalance between demand and work capacity, because of unfavorable working conditions.

### 1.5 Theoretical model

Based on the research model of Folkman and Lazarus et al in 1986, the research team wanted to apply three types to deal with stress: (1) Dealing with stress in the way focusing on emotion; (2) Dealing with stress in the way focusing on actions; (3) Dealing with stress in the way focusing on thinking.

**Figure 1: Dealing with stress model**



*(Source : Folkman và Lazarus, 1986)*

In particular, (1) Dealing with stress in the way focusing on emotion includes ways such as: find a psychological counselor for advice, confide with your parents, close friends or someone you trust; Regularly think positively. (2) Dealing with stress in the way focusing on actions aims at ways



like: Tend to look for a new passion (participate in sports activities, listen to music, read books, ...), often try to eat moderately, exercise and rest properly, face stressful issues and try to adapt or find ways to solve them. (3) Dealing with stress in the way focusing on thinking includes methods such as: anger at others; abuse of stimulants to reduce stress; Often have self-injury; often hide, postpone or do not do things related to the problems you are facing.

## 2. Research methods

The research team selected a sample of high school students in Hanoi, including students in grades 10, 11 from 3 schools such as Kim Lien high schools, and Viet Duc high schools and Nguyen Trai high school. Kim Lien and Viet Duc are schools belong to the top 10 high schools with the highest entranced score in Hanoi and top 10 of 100 the best high school in Vietnam. Nguyen Trai high school is school in suburb of Hanoi, the entranced score is only a half of the score for the above mentioned schools. The study was conducted with 300 questionnaires at first but only 250 questionnaires were handled in April 2017. After eliminating 17 inappropriate questionnaires, there were 233 qualified questionnaires. In particular, the survey subjects are male accounting for 36.1%, female accounting for 63.9%. Classifying by grade, the number of subjects that are in grade 10 is 120 people, accounting for 51.5%, meanwhile, the number of subjects who are grade 11 students is 113 people, accounting for 48.5%. Classifying by school, Kim Lien High School accounts for 39.1%, Nguyen Trai High School accounts for 33.9%, Viet Duc High School accounts for 27%. Classifying by GPA, Fail, Passing grade, Satisfactory, Good, Excellent account for 1.3%, 4.7%, 33.5%, 51.1%, 9.4% respectively. Also, the research team conducted in-depth interviews with 5 students, 10 teachers and 10 parents of students from Kim Lien High School, Nguyen Trai and Viet Duc in Hanoi to understand ways of dealing with stress of high school students in Hanoi, Vietnam.

The questionnaire was built on secondary research models and DASS 21 scale, with 2 parts. Part 1 is about the personal information of students such as age, gender, school, class, GPA. Part 2 is about questions related to students' understanding, current stress situation and ways of dealing with stress. In particular, to examine the stress level of high school students in Hanoi by their self-assessment, we used the anxiety-depression-stress test developed by a group of psychologists from the University of New South Wales (Australia), which was standardized in Vietnam (Lovibond SH, Lovibond PF, 1995). 5 measurements of DASS 21 (1- Not available, 2- Sometimes, 3- Often, 4- Quite often, 5- Very often) with 7 clauses to measure the stress level. The score of stress level is calculated by adding up the points from 1 to 7. The total is compared with each stress level in DASS 21: normal level (7-14 points); mild level (15-17 points); the moderate level (18-19 points); severe level (20-23 points); extremely severe level (24-35 points). The factor affecting stress used 7 items relating to stress out of 21 items of DASS and other 14 items relating to depression and anxiety. 10 ways to cope with stress was developed by research team based on interviewings. Five Liked scale was used, students were asked to answer by choosing a level from 1 to 5 corresponding to strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, completely agree. The collected data was coding and entering data sheet of SPSS 20 software for analysis.





### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Situation of stress level among high school students in Hanoi

**Table 1: Stress level among high school students in Hanoi**

Severity	Score	Stress level of students (%)
Normal	7- 14	23.6
Mild	15- 17	13.7
Moderate	18- 19	24.5
Severe	20- 23	23.2
Extremely severe	24- 35	15

The summary table 1 shows that in 233 high school students in Hanoi which are surveyed through the DASS 21 scale, the stress at moderate level has the highest rate with 24.5%, the second is the severe stress level with 23.2%, the proportion of students at extremely severe stress level and mild stress level are 15% and 13.7%, respectively. Besides, 38.2% of students who have the manifestations of stress from severe to extremely severe is an alarming number, which requires school counseling programs so that students can have better mental health and quality of life. .

**Table 2: Comparison of stress levels among high school students by demographic**

Criteria		Normal		Mild		Moderate		Severe		Extremel y severe		Total		p va lu e
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
School	Kim Lien	22	24.2	12	13.2	20	22	19	20.8	18	19.8	91	100	



	<b>Nguyen Trai</b>	13	16.5	14	17.7	26	32.9	23	29.1	3	3.8	79	100	0.0 23
	<b>Viet Duc</b>	20	31.7	6	9.5	11	17.5	12	19.1	14	22.2	63	100	
<b>Grade</b>	<b>10</b>	23	19.2	19	15.8	28	23.3	30	25	20	16.7	120	100	0.0 00
	<b>11</b>	12	10.3	18	15.5	18	15.7	34	30.2	31	28.3	113	100	
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Nam</b>	39	46.2	15	17.9	19	22.6	4	5	7	8.3	84	100	0.0 12
	<b>Nữ</b>	32	21.5	17	11.4	38	25.5	34	22.8	28	18.8	149	100	
<b>GPA</b>	<b>Fail</b>	1	33.3	0	0	1	33.3	1	33.3	0	0	3	100	0.0 31
	<b>Passing grade</b>	3	27.2	1	9.1	2	18.2	5	45.5	0	0	11	100	
	<b>Satisfactory</b>	16	20.5	16	20.5	21	26.9	17	21.8	8	10.3	78	100	
	<b>Good</b>	30	25.3	12	10.1	30	25.2	26	21.8	21	17.6	119	100	
	<b>Excellent</b>	5	22.8	3	13.6	3	13.6	5	22.7	6	27.3	22	100	

Table 2 shows that there are no difference of stress level of student of Viet Duc and Kim Lien high school, the percentage of level of stress from severe to extremely severe is 41.3 and 40.6 respectively. However, the stress level of students of this two schools is higher than of students of Nguyen Trai school (32.9%). Viet Duc and Kim Lien is very high quality school and quality of





students, these schools are reputable for high rate of entrance for high ranking universities in Vietnam. Thus in these schools, students study harder than Nguyen Trai school.

The female students suffer stress more than male student ( the percentage of level of stress from severe to extremely severe in male is 13.3%, while the figure in female is 41.6%. Female students often have more psychological problems than male students do, may be cause stem from the specific psychological - physiological development of students according to gender. Girls in high school age are generally more mature than boys in both psychological - physiological and social skills so girls tend to be more likely to experience stress.

For the grade, the higher the grade is, the more anxious students feel because of preparing for the final exam which is the most important thing in everyone's life, so, students may feel more anxious, stressed and depressed . More specifically, the proportion of the level of stress from severe to extremely severe in students in 11th and 10th grades are 58.5% and 41.7% respectively.

Level of stress from severe to extremely severe has the highest rate with excellent GPA at 27.3% or the higher the student's academic performance get, the more severe the stress situation is. It is an understandable thing because with students, learning is the most important task, sometimes academic achievements are the pride of the families, not achieving high academic results is a great pressure, not to mention the worries about the future exam results ... That indicates the expectation comes from families, schools, exams....

### 3.2 Situation of knowledge of stress among high school students in Hanoi

**Table 3: Knowledge of stress among high school students**

Percentage					Mean	STD
Nothing	Little	Normal	Much	Very much		
3	8.2	58.8	20.6	9.4	3.25	0.851

The data in Table 3 shows that the proportion of high school students choosing to have knowledge of stress at normal level accounts for 58.8%. The percentage of students who are little aware of stress accounts for 8.2% and only 3% of students know nothing about stress. The remainder is 30% of students (the rate of understanding stress much and very much are 20.6% and 9.4% respectively) having profound knowledge of stress and ways to deal with stress. This illustrates that parents and schools and societies need to find educational methods to help high school students improve their knowledge, learn more about the manifestations of stress to help them apply ways to deal with stress effectively.



**Table 4: Comparison of knowledge of stress among high school students**

Criteria		Percentage					Mean	STD	P
		Nothing	Little	Normal	Much	Very much			
Grade	10	4.2	11.7	59.2	18.3	6.6	3.12	0.852	0.011
	11	1.8	4.4	58.4	23	12.4	3.4	0.830	
Gender	Male	6	9.5	56	19	9.5	3.17	0.103	0.245
	Female	1.3	7.4	60.4	21.5	9.4	3.30	0.065	

In Table 4, the mean of the level of knowledge in 11th grade students is 3.4, which is higher than the figure in grade 10 with 3.12. So we can conclude that the level of knowledge of stress of 11th grade students is higher than the level of understanding of stress of 10th grade students. Besides, with a p-value at 0.245, we can conclude that there is no difference between male and female students in the level of understanding stress.

### 3.3 Situation of responses to stress among high school students in Hanoi

There are 3 ways to cope with stress, in which, the most selected group is emotion-focused group (Mean = 2.92). The second is dealing with stress the way focusing on thinking (Mean = 2.2) and finally, the way of focusing on activities is the least chosen method by students (Mean = 1.07). In general, when children experience stress situation, they know how to find ways to help themselves reduce this situation. However, not all students choose the right method to deal with stress from life to study.

### 3.3.1 Dealing with stress in the way focusing on emotions

**Table 5: Dealing with stress in the way focusing on emotions**

Contents	Mean	SD	1		2		3		4		5	
			f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Mom / Dad helps me find a psychotherapist, a psychological counseling call center for advice.	1.99	1.139	108	46.4	55	23.6	44	18.9	17	7.3	9	3.9
I confide private matters to my parents, close friends or someone I trust.	3.15	1.326	40	17.2	27	11.6	66	28.3	58	24.9	42	18
I think positively, optimistically about the good things.	3.63	1.111	12	5.2	18	7.7	77	33	64	27.5	62	26.6

Looking at the table 5, it is obvious that there are 3 emotion-focused responses, in which the most selected response is “*I think positively and optimistically about good things*”. 54.1% is the proportion of students agreeing and fully agreeing with this response with Mean = 3.63. The second one is the way “*I confide private matters to my parents, close friends or someone I trust*” with 42.9% and finally, only 26 students chose to respond “*Mom / Dad helps me find a psychotherapist, a psychological counseling call center for advice*”, equivalent to 11.2%. Sharing with the research team, Mrs. Pham Hai Anh, 41 years old, a math teacher at Kim Lien high school, said: “*I often help students find out the causes of stress to help them relieve stress and organize student groups to help their classmates, create fun spaces. During extracurricular activities, I often design the program: “The secret to goodbye stress” for students to share with each other. In addition, if a student is found to be under severe stress, I often advise the family to take them to a psychiatrist or National Hospital of Acupuncture*”. A student Nguyen Duc Trung (10th grade, Nguyen Trai high school ) chose a way to cope with stress.: “*When I encounter stress, I often share it with my best*

*friend because only she is someone I trust and understand me. When I speak out my feelings and feelings, I feel much more relaxed. ”*

### 3.3.2. Dealing with stress in the way focusing on actions

**Table 6: Dealing with stress in the way focusing on actions**

Contents	SD	Mean	1		2		3		4		5	
			f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I tend to look for a new passion (participating in sport and entertainment activities; listening to music; reading books, ...)	1.143	3.61	14	6	26	11.2	52	22.3	85	36.5	56	24
I try to eat and drink moderately, do exercise regularly and rest properly.	1.037	3.26	6	2.6	51	21.9	86	36.9	57	24.5	33	14.2
I am facing with stressful issues and trying to adapt or finding ways to solve them.	1.043	3.34	10	4.3	41	17.6	71	30.5	82	35.2	29	12.4

Table 6 shows that there are 3 ways of coping with stress which concentrate on actions. In which, the most popular response is “*I tend to look for a new passion (participating in sport and entertainment activities; listening to music; reading books, ...*” with 141 students agreeing and



fully agreeing with this response, equivalent to 60.5% and Mean = 3.61. The second is *"I am facing with stressful issues and trying to adapt or finding ways to solve them"* with 47.6%. Finally, *"I try to eat and drink moderately, do exercise regularly and rest properly"* response accounts for 38.7%. From the Mean, we find that there is not much difference in the action-focused responses. Mrs. Nguyen Thi Huong, 43 years old, who has a 10th grade child said, *"I often create conditions for my children to participate in extracurricular and sport activities, learn martial arts, listen to music, etc. to help them relieve stress after hard working and stressful hours"*. However, Mrs. Phan Thi Kim Dung (mother of a 11th grade student) said that the way to help students cope with stress is *"I often instruct my children how to study at home or do homework effectively and remind them to learn scientifically"*.

### 3.3.3 Dealing with stress in the way focusing on thinking

**Table 7: Dealing with stress in the way focusing on thinking**

Contents	Mean	SD	1		2		3		4		5	
			f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I often vent my anger on others.	<b>2.6</b>	1.117	48	20.6	68	29.2	63	27	47	20.2	7	3
I abuse stimulants to reduce stress.	<b>1.72</b>	1.023	136	58.4	48	20.6	32	13.7	12	5.2	5	2.1
I often injure myself.	<b>1.92</b>	1.098	114	48.9	54	23.2	41	17.6	18	7.7	6	2.6
I often evade, postpone or do not do things that are related to the problems I'm facing with	<b>2.60</b>	1.189	51	21.9	60	25.8	71	30.5	34	14.6	17	7.3

As can be seen from Table 7, there are 4 ways to dealing with stress that focus on thoughts. In which, the most popular response is *"I often evade, postpone or do not do things that are related to the problems I'm facing with"* with 51 students agreeing and fully agreeing with this response, accounting for 21.9% and Mean = 2.6. Moreover, 111 is the number of students who disagree and fully disagree with this response, accounting for 47.7%. Concurring with the above point of view, a student Phan Thi Ngoc Anh (11th grade, Viet Duc high school ) said: *"Whenever I encounter problems that make me feel stressed, thoughtful or worried, I just want to evade and go somewhere*



*far away in order not to think about them*". The second response is the action "*I often vent my anger on others*" with 23.2% students agreeing and fully agreeing and Mean= 2.56. There are 116 students who disagree and fully disagree with this response, accounting for 49.8%. The third response is "*I often injure myself*" with the percentage of strongly agreeing, agreeing and fully disagreeing, disagreeing, making up 10.3% and 72.1% respectively. Similarly to the last response "*I abuse stimulants to reduce stress*", the percentage of people who fully agree, agree and fully disagree, disagree are 7.3% and 79 % respectively .

## 4. Discussions and conclusion

### 4.1 Summary of the study

These are alarming figures for parents, teachers and schools in Hanoi, the research results showed that: (1) Up to 38.2% of students experienced stress from severe to extremely severe, (2) The level of severe stress appeared more in grade 11 than in grade 10 but the difference is not much, (3) Female students had higher stress levels than male students did, (4) The higher the student's academic performance got, the more severe the stress situation was. This implied that learning issues put considerable pressure on high school students in Hanoi. (5) In fact, 30% of high school students in Hanoi had a good understanding of stress. (6) High school students tended to deal with stress in ways that concentrate mostly on actions and emotions and focus less on thoughts. This proved that students preferred positive and proactive responses to negative ones.

### 4.2 Discussion of the result

In this study, in 233 students surveyed, 76.4% was the percentage of students showed signs of stress, in which the percentage of students in severe and very stressful state was 38.2%. Comparing with the result of studies of Ngo Hoang Anh, Vu Ngoc Duy, and Nguyen Thi My Trang (2012) and Nguyen Thanh Chung (2017) mentioned in literature review, it is obvious that students have higher stress rate than others did in common because they usually face with many problems and the most common of which is pressure in learning. In particular, when students get closer to the end of the grade, the pressure that students have to suffer is bigger and bigger as they're about to take part in the national high school exam. Therefore, there is no denial that students can get stressed easily.

The percentage of high school students in Hanoi who chose to have a good and very good understanding of stress is only 30%, which proves that the understanding of stress knowledge among students is still not high. This is understandable because although stress is the common concern of the whole society, education and advocacy on school mental health have not been promoted and effective yet in schools and the media. Apart from knowledge acquired in books, students still lack practical knowledge about mental health in general and stress in particular. Therefore, students need to be educated regularly and have practice sessions to understand how to



deal with the unpredictable damaging effects that stress can cause not only high school students but also their families and societies.

There are several ways that students can make their choice to help them reduce stress. However, not all students will choose the appropriate way to deal with stressful situations. Most of students chose the method on actions and emotions to reduce stress, the one most used is "*I think positively and optimistically about good things*" (Mean = 3.63). This means that students had made positive and proactive responses. However, the response "*Parents help me find a psychiatrist counselor, psychological counseling call center for advice*" is one of the ways students chose less (Mean = 1.99). The number of students who chose this method is much lower than the others because in Vietnam, the number of centers and call centers for psychological counseling has not been opened much and their operation has not been really professional. Therefore, some parents are partly ignorant of this type, the other is because they disregard the seriousness of stress, they have not cared for or help their children. In addition, there is also a cause from the students, because of their shyness, anxiety, fear and shame, they do not dare to say about the feelings, situations, problems that they are facing with. In general, responses of high school students in Hanoi focused mostly on actions and emotions, but less focus on thoughts such as "*I abuse stimulants to reduce stress*" was one of the less used response (Mean = 1.023). This was a good sign because students did not use negative responses to relieve stress.

Currently, students at many high schools in Hanoi concern themselves in and focus on stress issues and ways to dealing with it to help themselves relieve stress because they not only know stress through internet, television or newspapers but they also gained a lot of stress through extra curricular activities about mental health at school. In addition, the school also helps students reduce stress by encourage organizing of recreational activities such as culture, arts, sports and physical education; participate in organizational activities and social organizations; organizing many tours, picnics, ...

#### 4.3 Recommendations

The research proposed some measures to reduce stress in high school students in Hanoi.

In terms of families, parents need to: (1) give their children private spaces to think and decide by themselves to be more mature in life, (2) take time to care for their children, often confide, share, and help them to solve problems in life, (3) encourage children to express their own emotions and thoughts and respect these emotions and thoughts, (4) care about children's study and regularly contact with the school to promptly grasp the difficulties in learning of students.

In terms of schools, teachers should (1) guide effective learning methods for students, (2) collaborate with universities, individuals, organizations or organizations to organize future career orientation workshops to support students in choosing right universities and right career (3) effectively organize extracurricular activities to help students have a useful playground after





stressful study hours, (4) slowly explain problems clearly to students when conflicts occur between teachers and students.

In terms of students, they need (1) learn how to care more for their families, open their heart more to parents and close people to reduce conflicts with family members, (2) learn to think positively and optimistically, (3) pay attention to regime, rest and taking exercises, (4) expand their relationship to share their troubles.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

The results of stress levels and ways of dealing with stress among high school students in Hanoi showed that 76.4% of students had signs of stress, in which there was up to 38.2% of students in severe and extremely severe stress condition. However, the percentage of students with good knowledge of stress was very low at only 30%. These are noteworthy numbers for society as well as the school and parents to consider. Therefore, if we do not recognize problems properly, stress status of students will become more and more serious.

The conclusions summarized by the research team after this study were the basis for making recommendations to leaders, schools, teachers, parents and students about both ways and supportive measures to help students prevent or reduce stress and rebalance their lives. Thereby, students will move themselves to more positive and optimistic thoughts and actions. However, the research still had some limitations because of only conducting the study of 10th and 11th grade students at high schools in Hanoi. So, there was no picture of this problem in 12th grade students when they were at higher stress levels due to university entrance pressure. On the other hand, the study only investigated good schools in Hanoi, so it might not even represent students in Hanoi.

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