Original Research Article

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Support Measures for Preschool Children Experiencing Psychological Disturbances in Preschools in the Mekong Delta Region

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Abstract: In the context of modern society, which inadvertently exerts increasing pressure on children's vulnerable inner worlds, this study raises an urgent alarm regarding the current state of support for children with psychological disturbances in the Mekong Delta region. Drawing on a survey of 269 teachers and educational administrators, the study presents a multidimensional picture that is both hopeful and deeply concerning. The most prominent positive finding is the strong-almost unanimous-consensus among educational practitioners. They demonstrate a profound awareness of the importance ($M = 3.51$) and urgency of the issue, identifying "early detection and timely intervention" as the highest strategic priority ($M = 3.61$). Moreover, educators consistently agree that an effective support model should function as an integrated "ecosystem," characterized by close coordination among schools, families ($M = 3.52$), and professional specialists ($M = 3.42$). However, the study also reveals a troubling "capacity gap." While teachers perform well in universal educational approaches, such as social–emotional skills education ($M = 3.48$), they exhibit clear uncertainty and inconsistency when implementing specialized intervention or therapeutic measures. Approaches such as play therapy and therapeutic storytelling receive the lowest evaluations ($M = 3.38$) and show the greatest variability in practice (highest SD = 0.789). These findings suggest that the core challenge in the Mekong Delta is no longer a lack of awareness, but rather a shortage of specialized tools and professional skills. The most pressing priority at present is therefore to equip teachers with practical therapeutic competencies, enabling their high level of consensus to be translated into effective and timely intervention actions.

Keywords: Psychological disturbances; Preschool children; Support measures; Mekong Delta

1. Introduction

Within the flow of contemporary life, Early Childhood Education (ECE) is widely regarded as a solid foundation for nurturing the comprehensive development of the future generation-physically, intellectually, and, most importantly, psychologically. However, the rapid pace of social development, accompanied by invisible pressures, has meant that young children are no longer entirely carefree. Their fragile hearts and

minds are increasingly confronted with psychological disturbances, ranging from anxiety and behavioral disorders to difficulties in social interaction. If such psychological disturbances are not detected and supported in a timely manner, they may result in profound consequences, hindering children's learning processes, personality formation, and social adaptation.

In this context, the preschool system serves as the first "protective wall" safeguarding children's mental health. Nevertheless, the provision of specialized and effective support measures for this vulnerable group remains limited, particularly in regions undergoing rapid economic and social transformation. The Mekong Delta-a fertile land characterized by the interweaving of riverine culture and accelerated economic development-is facing distinctive challenges. Changes in family structures, parental livelihood pressures, and local cultural characteristics have given rise to patterns of psychological disturbances among preschool children that differ from those observed in major urban areas.

Research on support measures in the Mekong Delta is therefore not only of scientific significance but also of profound humanitarian value, aiming to ensure that all children, regardless of where they are born, receive optimal mental health care. Although several studies have addressed children's mental health in Vietnam, most have focused on large cities or remained at a general theoretical level. In-depth research that proposes practical support measures tailored to local facilities, human resources, and the cultural characteristics of the Mekong Delta remains a substantial gap that needs to be addressed.

This study is expected to make important contributions, not only by enhancing the quality of early childhood education in the Mekong Delta, but also by serving as a call to awareness and action-urging appropriate attention to the mental health of preschool children, the nation's most precious asset.

2. Research Methodology

The study sample comprised a total of 269 participants, all of whom were female. The sample characteristics were distributed according to area of residence (urban and rural). Specifically, 97 women (36.1%) resided in urban areas, while 172 women (63.9%) resided in rural areas.

This study employed a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional research design. This design allowed data to be collected at a single point in time in order to describe and analyze potential relationships among the key variables within the surveyed sample.

Ethical considerations: All participants were clearly informed about the purpose of the study, and voluntary participation as well as confidentiality of information were ensured.

3. Research Results

Key Concepts of the Study

(1). Mental Health

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health not merely as the absence of mental disorders or illness, but as "a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to contribute to his or her community" (WHO, 2022). In the context of early childhood education, mental health refers to children's capacity to achieve emotional and social developmental milestones, establish secure relationships, and demonstrate self-regulation skills (Egell, 2021).

(2). Psychological Disturbances / Disorders

Psychological disturbances (or mental disorders) are patterns of psychological functioning or behavior that result in significant distress or impairment in personal functioning (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2022). In children, these disturbances are understood as marked deviations from typical developmental norms, manifested through difficulties in behavior, emotional regulation, or social interaction (Mash & Wolfe, 2023). They are commonly classified into two major categories:

Internalizing disturbances: Emotional problems such as anxiety, depression, withdrawal, and excessive fear, which are often less observable in young children.

Externalizing disturbances: Behavioral problems such as aggression, oppositional behaviors, and attention-deficit/hyperactivity symptoms, which are more readily apparent in classroom settings.

(3). Psychological Disturbances in Preschool Children

Because preschool children have not yet fully developed the capacity to verbalize their emotions, psychological disturbances at this age are typically expressed through observable behaviors and failures

to acquire key social competencies (Kopelman et al., 2022). Indicators may include frequent and intense irritability, extreme difficulty separating from caregivers, unrealistic fears, inability to engage in peer play, or repetitive behaviors that interfere with daily functioning. The identification and diagnosis of psychological disturbances in preschool-aged children require careful, context-sensitive assessment within both family and educational environments (Egell, 2021).

(4). Support Measures

Support measures refer to strategies, activities, and systems implemented within educational settings to prevent, provide early intervention for, and deliver intensive support to children experiencing mental health difficulties (Trần & VĐS, 2022). In preschool education, these measures are commonly organized within a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework, including:

Tier 1 (Universal): Supports provided to all children, such as creating a positive classroom environment and implementing social–emotional learning activities (as reflected in **Table 5** of the present study).

Tier 2 (Targeted): Small-group interventions for children identified as being at risk.

Tier 3 (Intensive): Individualized interventions that require close collaboration with mental health professionals (as reflected in **Table 4**) (Domitrovich et al., 2021).

4. The Importance of Supporting Children with Psychological Disturbances in Preschool Settings

Analyzing the strategic importance of providing support for children with psychological disturbances directly within preschool settings is essential, as early childhood represents a critical developmental window that profoundly shapes children's long-term psychological and emotional well-being. From the perspective of the preschool's role as the child's first formal socialization environment, timely intervention and support for psychological disturbances carry decisive implications for children's future development. In this context, preschool-based support serves not only a preventive function but also lays the foundation for healthy emotional regulation, social competence, and learning readiness. Early identification and intervention can mitigate the escalation of psychological difficulties, reduce the risk of long-term maladjustment, and enhance children's capacity to engage positively with peers, teachers, and learning activities.

The following section presents an in-depth, multidimensional analysis of the importance of supporting preschool children with psychological disturbances, based on survey results collected from 269 preschool administrators and teachers.

Table 1. Perceived Importance of Supporting Preschool Children with Psychological Disturbances

No.	Importance Statements	Level of Implementation (%) (N = 269)				Mean	SD
		1	2	3	4		
1	Providing support for children with psychological disturbances is an urgent issue in early childhood education.	5.6	0.7	30.5	63.2	3.51	0.776
2	Psychological disturbances seriously affect children's holistic development.	4.8	1.1	32.0	62.1	3.51	0.751
3	Teachers need to be equipped with knowledge about different types of psychological disturbances in children.	4.8	1.1	34.6	59.5	3.49	0.751
4	Schools need to collaborate with families in providing psychological support for children.	5.6	0.7	28.6	65.1	3.53	0.775
	Overall Mean					**3.51**	**0.763**

Note: 1 = Not important; 2 = Slightly important; 3 = Important; 4 = Very important.

The criterion *"Providing support for children with psychological disturbances is an urgent issue in early childhood education"* achieved a mean score (M) of 3.51, with 93.7% of respondents rating it as *"Important"* or *"Very important."* This result indicates a high level of consensus among educational practitioners regarding the timeliness and imperative nature of psychological support activities. The perceived urgency is attributed to the increasing prevalence of mental health problems

among young children, driven by environmental pressures, limitations in parental caregiving skills, and the growing complexity of psychological disturbances such as anxiety disorders and behavioral disorders. Recognizing this issue as urgent suggests that teachers have moved beyond a traditional education paradigm that primarily emphasizes academic knowledge, toward an awareness of the school's proactive role in early identification and intervention.

With a mean score of 3.51 and a high agreement rate of 94.1%, the criterion *"Psychological disturbances seriously affect children's holistic development"* reflects a sound and scientifically grounded understanding of the consequences of mental health problems in early childhood. This strong consensus is supported by empirical evidence indicating that psychological disturbances directly affect learning mechanisms, social interaction skills, and personality development during this foundational stage. Children experiencing psychological disturbances often struggle with emotional regulation, leading to reduced cognitive engagement (thus affecting learning outcomes) and the emergence of maladaptive behaviors (thus impairing peer relationships). Accordingly, this shared perception provides a critical rationale for schools to prioritize resources and interventions aimed at preventing long-term negative developmental outcomes.

Although it recorded the lowest mean score among the criteria (M = 3.49), the criterion *"Teachers need to be equipped with knowledge about different types of psychological disturbances in children"* still received a high importance rating from 94.1% of respondents. This finding underscores the pivotal role of professional training and capacity building. In the context of increasingly complex psychological difficulties among preschool children, teachers can no longer rely solely on experiential knowledge; instead, they require scientifically grounded competencies in early identification, classification, and the application of initial support strategies. Such professional knowledge constitutes a prerequisite for translating awareness of importance into effective intervention practices, while also ensuring professionalism and minimizing potential risks in psychological support for children.

The criterion *"Schools need to collaborate with families in providing psychological support for children"* achieved the highest mean score (M = 3.53),

with 93.7% of respondents rating it as *"Important"* or *"Very important."* This result reflects a strategic recognition that children's developmental environments must be consistent and coordinated across school and family contexts. Psychological disturbances often arise from multifaceted factors rooted in both environments; therefore, school-based interventions are likely to be less effective without continuity and reinforcement from families. Such collaboration not only enables schools to obtain more comprehensive information about the child but also enhances parental capacity, positioning families as essential partners in their children's psychological recovery and well-being.

An analysis of the statistical indicators in **Table 1** reveals that not only are all mean scores relatively high ($3.49 \leqslant M \leqslant 3.53$), but the standard deviations are also consistently low (ranging from 0.751 to 0.776). Low standard deviation values carry important scientific implications, as they indicate a high level of homogeneity in perceptions among teachers and administrators (N = 269) regarding the importance of supporting preschool children with psychological disturbances. Specifically, standard deviations below 0.8 demonstrate limited dispersion of responses, meaning that most participants clustered around the *"Important"* and *"Very important"* categories. This strong consensus constitutes a positive prerequisite and a solid empirical foundation for affirming the urgency and strategic significance of the research topic. It also suggests that the support measures proposed in this study are likely to receive substantial endorsement and demonstrate high feasibility when implemented in preschool settings across the Mekong Delta region.

5. Objectives of Supporting Preschool Children with Psychological Disturbances

To ensure that support measures are implemented in a coordinated, focused, and practically effective manner, it is essential first to clarify the system of objectives guiding psychological support activities for preschool children. These objectives serve as the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of intervention processes. Clearly defining appropriate goals functions as a guiding framework for the scientific design and implementation of intervention measures, thereby enhancing their overall effectiveness and sustainability in early childhood education settings.

Table 2. Objectives of Supporting Preschool Children with Psychological Disturbances

No.	Objectives of Support	Level of Appropriateness, Percentage (%) (N = 269)				Mean (M)	SD
		1	2	3	4		
1	Helping children recognize negative emotions and learn emotional regulation skills	5.2	2.6	33.8	58.4	3.45	0.784
2	Enhancing children's self-confidence and adaptability to the learning environment	3.7	2.6	33.1	60.6	3.51	0.726
3	Supporting children in developing positive relationships with peers and teachers	4.1	2.2	27.1	66.5	3.56	0.734
4	Early identification and timely intervention for atypical psychological manifestations	5.6	0.4	21.9	72.1	3.61	0.764
Overall mean						**3.53**	**0.752**

Note: 1 = Not appropriate; 2 = Slightly appropriate; 3 = Appropriate; 4 = Very appropriate.

The survey results presented in **Table 2** indicate a very high level of consensus among teachers and administrators (N = 269) regarding the objectives of supporting preschool children with psychological disturbances. This is clearly reflected in the overall mean score (M = 3.53 on a 4-point scale), which closely approaches the level of "Very appropriate." In addition, the overall standard deviation (SD = 0.752) is relatively low, confirming a high degree of agreement among respondents and indicating minimal dispersion in perceptions of these objectives.

An examination of the mean scores for each criterion reveals a clear hierarchy of priorities in teachers' perceptions of intervention goals. The highest priority was given to **early identification and timely intervention** (M = 3.61). Specifically, Criterion 4, "Early identification and timely intervention for atypical psychological manifestations," achieved the highest mean score (3.61) and the highest proportion of responses at the "Very appropriate" level (72.1%).

This finding is highly logical and theoretically grounded. It suggests that educators perceive early identification as a foundational and prerequisite objective-a strategic first step in the support process. All subsequent support measures (e.g., emotional regulation or confidence enhancement) can only be effectively implemented once psychological difficulties have been identified. The strong emphasis on this objective reflects a shift from a passive approach (waiting until problems become evident) to a proactive orientation (systematic screening and early intervention).

The second most highly prioritized objective was **the development of positive relationships** (M =

3.56). Criterion 3, "Helping children develop positive relationships with peers and teachers," recorded a mean score of 3.56, with 66.5% of respondents rating it as "Very appropriate." This result highlights the crucial role of the preschool social environment. Teachers recognize that psychological disturbances often manifest through social withdrawal or difficulties in interaction; therefore, facilitating children's reintegration into the peer group and fostering secure relationships with teachers are considered core objectives, second only to early detection.

The objectives of enhancing self-confidence and adaptability (Criterion 2, M = 3.51) and supporting emotional recognition and regulation (Criterion 1, M = 3.45) were also rated highly, with agreement levels (ratings of 3 and 4 combined) of 93.7% and 92.2%, respectively. Although these objectives have slightly lower mean scores, they remain essential components of psychological support. This pattern may be explained by the fact that these objectives are more "internal" in nature and are often outcomes of the intervention process, whereas early identification and relationship-building are more "external" and process-oriented. Teachers appear to prioritize detection and environmental support first, followed by the development of individual psychological skills.

Regarding response variability, Criterion 2 ("Enhancing children's self-confidence and adaptability") showed the lowest standard deviation (SD = 0.726), indicating the highest level of agreement among respondents. Nearly all participants consistently viewed this objective as appropriate. In contrast, Criterion 1 ("Helping children recognize negative emotions") exhibited the highest standard deviation

(SD = 0.784), although still within a low range. This suggests a slightly greater variation in perceptions, possibly because a small number of teachers perceive emotional recognition-particularly of negative emotions-as more complex or less immediately feasible compared to other objectives.

Overall, the statistical patterns in **Table 2** demonstrate not only strong agreement on the relevance of all proposed objectives but also a coherent prioritization framework that emphasizes early detection, social integration, and gradual development of children's internal emotional capacities.

Table 2 provides strong evidence that the system of objectives for supporting preschool children with psychological disturbances has been clearly recognized, consistently understood, and highly valued by the teaching staff in the Mekong Delta region. The priority ranking reflects a logical and coherent line of thinking: early identification is considered the most critical objective (M = 3.61), followed by the creation of a positive social environment (M = 3.56), and finally the development of children's internal capacities, such as self-confidence (M = 3.51) and emotional regulation (M = 3.45).

6. Support Content for Preschool Children with Psychological Disturbances

Building on the agreed-upon objectives, the following section presents the survey results regarding the perceived appropriateness and the current implementation status of support activities for preschool children with psychological disturbances in kindergartens across the Mekong Delta (**Table 3**). The development of a scientifically grounded, contextually appropriate, and feasible system of support content is an essential requirement for ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of psychological support interventions in early childhood education.

Table 3. Support Content for Preschool Children with Psychological Disturbances

No.	Support Content	Level of Implementation, Percentage (%) (N = 269)				Mean (M)	SD
		1	2	3	4		
1	Organizing therapeutic play activities for children exhibiting anxiety and stress symptoms	5.6	2.2	37.9	54.3	3.41	0.789
2	Establishing an emotional corner where children can express feelings and relieve psychological distress	5.2	2.2	38.7	53.9	3.41	0.776
3	Implementing social–emotional skills education activities for children	4.8	1.1	35.3	58.7	3.48	0.751
4	Observing and documenting atypical behaviors to develop monitoring and support records	5.6	1.9	36.1	56.5	3.43	0.787
Overall Mean						**3.43**	**0.776**

Note: 1 = Not achieved; 2 = Average; 3 = Fair; 4 = Good.

Table 3 reflects a shift in focus from awareness (**Tables 1** and **2**) to the actual implementation of psychological support activities for children with mental and emotional difficulties in preschools across the Mekong Delta region, using a four-level scale (1 = Not achieved; 2 = Average; 3 = Fair; 4 = Good). The results present a generally positive picture while simultaneously revealing notable gaps in professional capacity within practical intervention efforts.

The overall mean score reached 3.43, falling between the *Fair* and *Good* levels. This finding indicates that, overall, preschools in the surveyed region have implemented basic support activities for children with psychological difficulties at a relatively satisfactory level. This represents a positive signal, suggesting a gradual transition from awareness to action, as teachers have begun to integrate psychological support activities into daily care and educational practices.

The overall standard deviation was 0.776, a relatively low value, indicating a high level of consistency in implementation across the surveyed institutions. This suggests that the "Fair" level of implementation reflects a general trend rather than being an average derived from a small group of highly effective schools and another group performing poorly.

A closer examination of individual items reveals a clear differentiation between universal educational activities and specialized intervention or therapeutic activities.

The most effectively implemented content was the organization of social and emotional skills education activities for children (M = 3.48; SD = 0.751). This item also exhibited the lowest standard deviation, indicating a high degree of uniformity and confidence in implementation across preschools. This result is logically consistent with current educational practice, as Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) has been formally integrated into the national Early Childhood Education curriculum and is considered a core professional competency of preschool teachers.

The criterion observing and recording atypical behaviors to establish monitoring and support profiles achieved a mean score of 3.43, indicating a *Fair* level of implementation. However, the relatively higher standard deviation (SD = 0.787) suggests variability in how systematically and scientifically this activity is conducted. While observation and documentation are common professional tasks, not all teachers appear to apply consistent or structured approaches when developing psychological support records.

In contrast, specialized therapeutic-oriented activities showed comparatively lower levels of implementation. Specifically, organizing therapeutic play activities for children exhibiting anxiety and stress and establishing emotional corners where children can express and regulate emotions both recorded the lowest mean scores (M = 3.41). Notably, therapeutic play demonstrated the highest standard deviation (SD = 0.789), indicating substantial inconsistency in practice.

This finding suggests that therapeutic play requires specialized psychological knowledge and intervention skills that differ fundamentally from conventional educational play. The high standard deviation implies that only a limited number of teachers-likely those with targeted training-are able to implement these activities effectively, while the majority remain uncertain or apply them only superficially. Similarly, although emotional corners are widely promoted as supportive tools, the results indicate that many teachers focus primarily on their physical setup, while their effective use for emotional sharing and regulation remains limited.

Overall, **Table 3** provides a clear depiction of current practice: preschool teachers in the Mekong Delta region demonstrate strong performance in implementing universal educational activities, particularly in social and emotional skills education. However, they encounter significant challenges and inconsistencies when engaging in tasks that require specialized psychological intervention skills. This constitutes an important empirical finding, suggesting that future interventions and recommendations should prioritize the development of specialized practical competencies for teachers, rather than focusing solely on reinforcing already institutionalized universal educational content.

7. Methods for Implementing Psychological Support for Children with Mental and Emotional Difficulties in Preschools

In the context of early childhood education, which increasingly emphasizes mental health and early intervention, analyzing the methods used to provide psychological support for children with mental and emotional difficulties in school settings has become an urgent requirement to ensure children's holistic development. Psychological support for preschool children with mental and emotional difficulties involves a combination of multiple approaches; therefore, a detailed analysis of each implementation method is necessary to identify their strengths, limitations, and potential for scalability.

Table 4. Methods for Implementing Psychological Support for Children with Mental and Emotional Difficulties in Preschools

No.	Methods of implementation	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	Mean	SD
1	Organizing workshops and training sessions on mental and emotional difficulties for preschool teachers	4.1	2.6	36.1	57.2	3.46	0.740
2	Collaborating with psychologists to support children with severe psychological problems	4.5	3.0	38.3	54.3	3.42	0.757
3	Enhancing communication with parents to facilitate early identification of atypical psychological manifestations	5.9	0.7	28.3	65.1	3.52	0.790
4	Applying therapeutic play, therapeutic storytelling, and art-based therapy activities	4.8	3.3	40.9	50.9	3.38	0.771
Overall mean						**3.45**	**0.765**

Note: 1 = Not appropriate; 2 = Slightly appropriate; 3 = Appropriate; 4 = Highly appropriate.

Data from **Table 4** summarize responses from 269 participants regarding the perceived appropriateness of methods used to support preschool children with mental and emotional difficulties. The analysis reveals a high level of consensus on the suitability of all proposed methods, with an overall mean score of 3.45 on a four-point scale, approaching the level of *Highly appropriate*. This indicates that all identified methods are regarded as important and necessary within the current context of early childhood education, reflecting strong professional agreement on the need for multi-faceted and collaborative approaches to psychological support in preschools.

A more in-depth analysis of each method reveals a clear hierarchy of priorities in the perceptions of the surveyed participants. The highest-rated method: "Enhancing communication with parents" (Mean = 3.52). This method received the highest proportion of "Highly appropriate" ratings (65.1%) and achieved the highest mean score (3.52). In total, 93.4% of respondents (65.1% + 28.3%) considered this approach to be "Appropriate" or "Highly appropriate." This finding is entirely logical and accurately reflects practical realities. The family constitutes the child's first and most influential developmental environment. Strengthening communication with parents plays a pivotal role in: (1) early identification, as parents are most familiar with their children's atypical behaviors; (2) intervention consistency, ensuring continuity and alignment between school- and home-based support strategies; and (3) trust building, creating a safe and coherent "support circle" for the child. Consequently, this method is regarded as foundational and prerequisite. Any school-based intervention in preschool settings is likely to be significantly less effective without close collaboration with families.

The method with the highest level of consensus: "Organizing workshops and training programs" (Mean = 3.46).

Although ranked second in terms of mean score (3.46), this method exhibited the lowest standard deviation (SD = 0.740), indicating the highest degree of consensus among respondents. This suggests near-universal agreement on the importance of capacity building for teachers. Preschool teachers are the "frontline practitioners," interacting with children on a daily basis. Equipping them with knowledge and skills related to mental and emotional difficulties through professional training and workshops is therefore considered a "hinge" solution. Only when teachers possess sufficient professional competence can they effectively conduct early identification (thereby facilitating communication with parents, as in Method 3) and implement basic intervention strategies (such as those described in Method 4).

The specialized intervention method: "Collaboration with psychologists" (Mean = 3.42). This method was also rated highly, with 92.6% of respondents considering it "Appropriate" or "Highly appropriate," ranking just below the two methods mentioned above. The result reflects a clear awareness of the professional limits of preschool teachers. In cases involving severe psychological difficulties, teachers' interventions alone are insufficient, and support from professionally trained psychologists becomes essential. This method represents a necessary "escalation" strategy, ensuring that children receive appropriate expert support when their difficulties exceed the school's internal capacity.

The classroom-based intervention method: "Applying therapeutic play, therapeutic storytelling, and related approaches" (Mean = 3.38). Although this method received the lowest mean score among the four, a mean of 3.38 remains relatively high, with nearly 92% of respondents (50.9% + 40.9%) rating it as "Appropriate" or "Highly appropriate." Its lower ranking may be attributed to the specialized nature of therapeutic interventions. While play and storytelling are routine activities in preschool education, their therapeutic application requires teachers to possess advanced psychological knowledge and specialized training in order to be implemented effectively. This approach represents a direct, high-potential intervention but also poses the greatest challenges for large-scale implementation due to the high professional competency demands placed on teachers.

Based on the analysis of **Table 4**, it can be concluded that all methods for supporting children with mental and emotional difficulties were evaluated as highly appropriate by the surveyed participants, with an overall mean score of 3.45 on a four-point scale. This finding reflects a clear recognition of the necessity

for a multidimensional intervention strategy. A more detailed examination indicates that foundational, enabling methods received the highest priority, particularly "Enhancing communication with parents" (Mean = 3.52) and "Organizing workshops and training programs for teachers" (Mean = 3.46). The survey data further point to a comprehensive support model that requires the integration of four key components: (1) a strong foundation of close collaboration between families and schools; (2) a core capacity of professionally trained teachers; (3) close linkage with psychological specialists for intensive interventions (Mean = 3.42); and (4) the application of direct therapeutic approaches within the classroom (Mean = 3.38).

8. Support Measures for Children with Mental and Emotional Difficulties in Preschools

In the context of the increasing prevalence of mental and emotional difficulties among children, analyzing support measures implemented in preschools has become an urgent necessity. Preschool represents the second most influential environment after the family and plays a direct role in children's holistic development. The following section of this study focuses on examining support measures for children with mental and emotional difficulties in preschool settings, including screening measures, individual interventions, group-based support, and coordination between schools and families.

Table 5. Support Measures for Children with Mental and Emotional Difficulties in Preschools

No.	Support Measures	Mean	SD
1	Establishing a positive classroom environment that supports children's mental health	3.41	.768
2	Organizing social–emotional learning activities for children	3.37	.773
3	Enhancing teachers' capacity to identify and support children with mental and emotional difficulties	3.39	.788
4	Strengthening collaboration among schools, families, and psychological specialists	3.46	.776
Overall Mean		**3.41**	**.776**

9. Results and Discussion

Results from **Table 5** indicate a very high level of consensus regarding the appropriateness of all four proposed support measures for children with mental and emotional difficulties in preschool settings. With an overall mean score of 3.41 on a four-point scale (where 3 represents "Appropriate" and 4 represents "Highly appropriate"), it is evident that respondents considered all measures to be both necessary and important.

Notably, differences in mean scores among the measures were minimal (ranging from 3.37 to 3.46), and standard deviations were relatively low and comparable (from .768 to .788). This pattern suggests a clear and shared understanding among respondents, who viewed these measures as an integrated and inseparable system of solutions rather than isolated interventions.

10. Analysis of Individual Measures (by Priority)

Measure 4: Strengthening collaboration among schools, families, and psychological specialists

(Mean = 3.46). This measure received the highest mean score, indicating that it was perceived as the most appropriate. This finding is highly logical, as children's mental and emotional difficulties are complex issues that cannot be effectively addressed by schools alone. Instead, they require a comprehensive "support ecosystem," in which families provide initial information and continuity of intervention at home, schools observe and implement educational supports, and specialists offer professional assessment and intensive intervention. This measure serves as the backbone of the entire intervention process; classroom-based efforts are unlikely to be effective without strong coordination among these three parties.

Measure 1: Establishing a positive classroom environment that supports children's mental health (Mean = 3.41). Ranked second and equal to the overall mean, this measure recorded the lowest standard deviation (.768), indicating the highest level of agreement among respondents. The classroom environment represents the most immediate and daily context influencing children. A positive environment-

characterized by safety, care, acceptance, and nonjudgment-serves both as a preventive measure for all children and as essential support for those experiencing difficulties. This foundational measure provides the "ground" upon which other interventions can function effectively.

Measure 3: Enhancing teachers' capacity to identify and support children with mental and emotional difficulties (Mean = 3.39). This measure also received a very high rating, ranking just below the two more structural measures. Teachers are the direct implementers of all support strategies in the classroom. If the classroom environment constitutes the foundation, then teachers' professional competence represents the key human factor. Teachers must be capable of early identification, creating positive environments, and coordinating effectively with families and specialists. This measure functions as the "key" enabling the entire support system to operate effectively.

Measure 2: Organizing social–emotional learning activities for children (Mean = 3.37). Although ranked lowest, this mean score remains high, underscoring its importance. This measure represents the most concrete and action-oriented form of intervention, directly equipping children with skills such as emotional awareness, self-regulation, and social problem-solving. Its slightly lower ranking may be explained by the prerequisite conditions required for effective implementation-namely, competent teachers and a positive classroom environment. Thus, this measure constitutes the "programmatic content" that becomes effective only after the broader support ecosystem has been established.

Overall, data from **Table 5** suggest that an ideal support model for children with mental and emotional difficulties in preschools is comprehensive and multi-tiered. Respondents did not prioritize any single measure in isolation but instead emphasized the importance of an integrated system. Structural and relational measures (triadic collaboration and classroom environment), together with teacher capacity, were viewed as foundational and slightly more critical than activity-based interventions. This hierarchy is logically consistent, as specific intervention activities cannot succeed without a strong support ecosystem, a safe environment, and competent teachers.

11. Discussion

The research findings provide a comprehensive and multidimensional insight into the current state of awareness and implementation of support measures for children with mental and emotional difficulties (MED) in preschools across the Mekong Delta region. Survey data collected from 269 administrators and preschool teachers reveal a strong and consistent consensus regarding the urgency and necessity of addressing this issue.

First, there is an almost unanimous agreement (overall mean of **Table 1** = 3.51; overall mean of **Table 2** = 3.53) concerning the importance and objectives of psychological support for children. This consensus is further evidenced by very low standard deviation values across all perception-related scales (e.g., .763 in **Table 1** and .752 in **Table 2**). Such strong agreement represents a favorable precondition, indicating that the preschool workforce in the Mekong Delta has largely overcome perceptual barriers and is ready to implement intervention measures in a systematic and coordinated manner.

Second, the study clearly identifies an ideal intervention model from the educators' perspective, with multi-stakeholder collaboration as its central pillar. In both **Table 4** (methods) and **Table 5** (measures), collaboration-related factors (with parents and with specialists) achieved the highest mean scores (Mean = 3.52 and Mean = 3.46, respectively). This finding underscores the shared understanding that mental and emotional difficulties constitute a complex issue requiring a comprehensive "support ecosystem," in which schools cannot operate effectively in isolation without the active involvement of families and mental health professionals. In addition, early identification is regarded as the foremost strategic objective (Mean = 3.61), reflecting a clear shift from reactive responses toward proactive intervention.

Third, the most significant finding of the study lies in the clear differentiation between general educational capacity and specialized intervention capacity. Results from **Table 3** indicate that teachers perform very well in areas aligned with the official preschool curriculum, particularly in social–emotional learning (Mean = 3.48). However, they demonstrate noticeable uncertainty and inconsistency when implementing specialized

therapeutic-oriented practices. Specifically, "organizing therapeutic play activities" yielded a relatively low mean score (3.41) alongside the highest standard deviation (.789), indicating considerable variability in practice. Similarly, the method of "applying therapeutic play, therapeutic storytelling, and art-based therapy" was rated as the least appropriate in **Table 4** (Mean = 3.38), not because it lacks importance, but because it requires advanced skills that teachers perceive themselves as not yet adequately equipped to deliver.

These findings effectively address the research gap identified in the introduction. They suggest that the primary challenge in the Mekong Delta context is no longer one of awareness-since awareness is already high-but rather one of implementation capacity, particularly in relation to specialized intervention techniques.

12. Conclusions

This study affirms that supporting preschool children who experience psychological disturbances is regarded as an urgent and highly important task by administrators and teachers in the Mekong Delta region.

Analysis of 269 survey questionnaires reveals a comprehensive support model, in which the top priority is given to early identification and timely intervention (M = 3.61), along with the establishment of a support ecosystem based on close collaboration among schools, families, and psychological professionals (M = 3.46). In addition, creating a positive classroom environment and strengthening teachers' professional capacity are also considered foundational measures.

The most significant finding of the study is the identification of a substantial gap in teachers' professional competencies. While universal social–emotional learning (SEL) activities are being implemented effectively (M = 3.48), specialized intervention/therapeutic approaches (such as play therapy, art therapy, and the effective use of emotional corners) represent the weakest area, characterized by uneven implementation and perceived as the most challenging.

Based on these conclusions, the study recommends that professional development programs for preschool teachers in the Mekong Delta should move beyond general educational content and place greater emphasis on in-depth training, as well as increased hands-on practice in basic psychological intervention and therapeutic skills, in order to meet the practical demands of supporting children with psychological disturbances.

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