

INFORMASI ARTIKEL

Received: February, 28, 2026

Revised: May, 03, 2026

Available online: May, 04, 2026

at: <https://e-jurnal.ipphorr.com/index.php/mhc>

Peer support and mental resilience among high school students

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Abstract

Background: Resilience is an individual's ability to survive, adapt, and bounce back in the face of stress or problems. In adolescence, especially high school students, resilience is greatly influenced by the social environment, one of which is peer social support. Positive support from peers can help students manage academic and social stress more adaptively.

Purpose: To determine the relationship between peer social support and resilience in high school students.

Method: Quantitative design with a descriptive correlational approach and a cross-sectional design. The population of this study was high school students, with samples selected using a purposive sampling technique. The research instruments were peer social support questionnaires and RISC 25 CD questionnaires. Data analysis was carried out univariately and bivariately using the Spearman Rho test.

Results: Most students have moderate peer social support and high resilience. The results of the correlation test showed a P Value = 0.00 ($P < 0.05$) with an r-count value = 0.496 which indicates sufficient correlation strength.

Conclusion: There is a significant relationship between peer social support and resilience in high school students.

Keywords: Adolescents; Peer Social Support; Resilience.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a unique developmental stage occurring within the age range of 11–20 years, characterized by significant biological, cognitive, and psychosocial changes (Stuart & Sundeen, 2016). Adolescents are in the stage of ego identity versus role confusion, in which individuals face the primary developmental task of forming a stable self-identity as a foundation for entering the next stage of development (Halter, 2024). Success or failure in accomplishing this developmental task greatly determines mental and emotional health in adulthood. Globally, the adolescent population reaches 1.2 billion, or approximately 18% of the total world population (Veronica, Abas, Hidayah, Sabtohadhi, Marlina, & Mulyani, 2022). In Indonesia, adolescents constitute a substantial age group, including in the Special Region of Yogyakarta and

Bantul Regency (Dewi, Idulfilastri, & Sari, 2022). The large number of adolescents highlights the importance of giving special attention to the mental health of this age group. Various studies indicate that adolescents are vulnerable to stress, anxiety, and depression, and are at risk of developing mental health disorders if they are unable to adapt to developmental pressures (Erwanto, Istiqomah, & Firdiyanti, 2022).

One important protective factor in dealing with these pressures is resilience. Resilience is defined as an individual's ability to survive, adapt, and recover from stress or adversity, and it is the result of a complex interaction between the individual and their environment (Clemens, Von Hirschhausen, & Fegert, 2022). Adolescents with higher levels of resilience tend to have better psychological well-being and lower levels of anxiety and depression

(Desrianty, Hassan, Zakaria, & Zaremohzzabieh, 2021).

In the educational context, resilience plays an important role in helping students cope with academic pressures and maintain learning achievement (Collado-Soler, Trigueros, Aguilar-Parra, & Navarro, 2023). Peer social support is one of the environmental factors that plays a significant role in the development of adolescent resilience. This support includes emotional, appraisal, instrumental, and informational support obtained from peers (Santoso, 2020). Previous studies have shown that peer social support is positively associated with psychological well-being and student resilience, and contributes to reducing levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Herwin, Kurniawati, Murti, Haryani, & Pramesti, 2025). A preliminary study conducted in a senior high school indicated that some grade X and XI students still experience academic difficulties, anxiety, and decreased self-confidence, while the peer social support they receive has not been optimal. This condition suggests a gap between the need for social support and the support perceived by students.

RESEARCH METHOD

A quantitative non-experimental design with a cross-sectional approach, which involves collecting data at a single point in time to examine the relationship between independent and dependent variables, where each subject is observed only once during questionnaire administration. The independent variable in this study was peer social support, while the dependent variable was resilience. The population consisted of all 10th and 11th grade

high school students, totalling 648 students. The sampling technique used was probability sampling with a proportionate stratified random sampling method. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, resulting in 248 students, which were proportionally distributed across classes with 14 students per class in both grades. During implementation, a total of 251 respondents participated due to adjustments after one student was unable to participate due to illness. Sample selection was conducted randomly using the Spin the Wheel application based on student attendance numbers. Inclusion criteria included 10th and 11th grade students who were willing to participate, while exclusion criteria included students who were ill or absent. The study was conducted at a high school, with data collected from November 20 to November 27, 2025. The instruments used were questionnaires: a peer social support questionnaire adapted from consisting of 34 items, and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) consisting of 25 items (Silaban, 2023). Data collection procedures included editing, coding, data entry, and tabulating using SPSS, followed by univariate and bivariate analysis. Univariate analysis was used to describe respondent characteristics and the distribution of each variable, including levels of peer social support and student resilience, presented in frequency and percentage distributions. Bivariate analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between peer social support and resilience among high school students. Since both variables were measured on an ordinal scale, the Spearman rho correlation test was used.

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Doi: 10.56922/mhc.v5i1.2734

RESEARCH RESULTS

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of High School Students' Resilience (N=251)

Variable	Results	sig	P-Value
Age (Mean±SD)(Range)(Year)	(16.3±0.9)(15-18)		
Resilience Level (n/%)			
High	113/45.0		
Moderate	77/30.7		
Low	61/24.3		
Peer Support (n/%)			
Very High	41/16.3	0.000	0.496
High	56/22.3		
Moderate	147/58.6		
Low	7/2.8		

Based on the table, the mean age of respondents was 16.3 ± 0.9 years, with an age range of 15–18 years. The distribution of resilience levels showed that nearly half of the respondents had a high level of resilience (113 students; 45.0%), followed by moderate resilience (77 students; 30.7%) and low resilience (61 students; 24.3%). Regarding peer support, most respondents were in the moderate category (147 students; 58.6%), followed by high (56 students; 22.3%), very high (41 students; 16.3%), and low (7 students; 2.8%). The statistical analysis indicated a significance value of 0.000 with a p-value of 0.496.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the majority of high school students have a high level of resilience, although a small proportion of students still exhibit low resilience. This high level of resilience suggests that students have relatively good abilities in coping with academic pressures as well as social problems. This condition is closely related to the developmental characteristics of the respondents, who are in adolescence, a phase in which emotional regulation and coping strategies begin to develop more maturely.

Previous research states that individuals with high resilience tend to experience lower levels of stress because they are able to maintain a positive attitude, optimism, and good self-control (Hidayat &

Ikromi, 2024). Resilient adolescents are more adaptive in facing developmental demands and are able to choose constructive coping strategies when dealing with problems (Sanchis-Sanchis, Grau, Moliner, & Morales-Murillo, 2020). At this stage, adolescents begin to develop emotional independence and more mature emotional regulation, enabling them to select adaptive coping strategies when encountering difficulties. The development of emotional regulation contributes to adolescents' readiness to face developmental challenges and prepare for future social roles.

Resilience among students in this study is also influenced by several aspects, such as personal competence, the ability to accept change positively, self-control, and spiritual influence (Connor & Davidson, 2023). Although resilience is generally high, weaknesses were still found in the aspect of personal competence, particularly among students who felt less capable of recovering from failure. This indicates that resilience is a dynamic process that continues to develop and requires ongoing reinforcement. In addition, the spiritual aspect contributes to students' resilience. A school environment that supports spiritual values enables students to develop a more positive outlook on life and better adaptability in facing pressures.

The results also show that most high school students have peer social support at a moderate level. This finding indicates that students have

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received support from their peers, although it is not yet fully optimal. Peer social support plays an important role during adolescence, as this developmental stage is characterized by a strong need to be accepted by one's social group (Syifa, Santoso, & Hambali, 2021). In line with developmental theory, Erik Erikson explains that individuals form intimate relationships with others and achieve intimacy by finding themselves within relationships without losing their identity, through the formation of healthy friendships and close interpersonal bonds (Izzati, Nuraini, & Tarigan, 2023). Students are in a developmental phase marked by a strong need for acceptance from peer groups through intensive social interactions and the formation of healthy friendships.

This study is consistent with previous research stating that peers play a significant role in providing emotional, appraisal, instrumental, and informational support to individuals (Mustikhatul, Wulandari, Putri, Khotijah, Sulistiawati, & Ariyanti, 2022). Such support helps students feel cared for, valued, and part of a social group, thereby providing psychological comfort (Chintia, Muktamiroh, & Pasiak, 2023). Peer social support is defined as the support received from peers in the form of physical and psychological well-being, fostering feelings of being loved, cared for, valued, and belonging to a social group (Mahendika, 2023). The strong influence of peers is an important and undeniable aspect of adolescence; thus, peer social support serves as one of the coping mechanisms that can enhance resilience.

Peer social support also contributes to the development of social skills and adolescents' adaptive abilities. Adolescents who have healthy friendships tend to possess better social skills and higher levels of social support (Wahyuni, 2024). Therefore, peer social support functions as an important coping mechanism for students in dealing with pressures during their school years. The results of the Spearman Rho correlation test show a significant relationship between peer social support and resilience among high school students ($p < 0.05$), with a moderate correlation strength and a positive direction. This indicates that the better the peer social support perceived by students, the higher their level of resilience.

Most students who have high peer social support

also demonstrate high levels of resilience. Conversely, among students with low peer social support, more individuals were found to have moderate to low resilience. These findings suggest that the presence of peers who provide attention, emotional support, assistance, and advice can help students improve their resilience. This is consistent with previous studies that reported a significant relationship between peer social support and adolescent resilience (Hidayat & Ikromi, 2024). Support from peers helps students feel accepted, valued, and not alone in facing problems, enabling them to recover more effectively from failure and pressure (Connor & Davidson, 2023). Theoretically, adolescents are in the stage of identity versus role confusion, in which peers play a dominant role in their social and emotional lives (Izzati et al., 2023). Healthy social relationships with peers help adolescents manage emotions and stress more adaptively (Stuart & Sundeen, 2016).

This supports the development of resilience, enabling students to cope with academic pressures, achievement demands, and emotional changes that commonly occur during adolescence. Positive peer support helps adolescents feel more confident, emotionally stable, and better able to face various challenges encountered during their school years. Peer social support is an important external factor in enhancing student resilience. Strengthening positive friendships within the school environment can serve as a strategic approach to help students cope with academic and social pressures during adolescence. However, resilience is not only influenced by social support but also by other factors such as emotional regulation, impulse control, optimism, causal analysis, empathy, self-efficacy, and achievement. Therefore, even when peer support is high, students' resilience may remain low if these internal factors have not yet developed optimally.

CONCLUSION

Most high school students reported moderate levels of peer social support and high levels of resilience. Statistical analysis demonstrated a significant and positive relationship between peer social support and student resilience. This finding confirms that peer social support plays a crucial role in enhancing students' ability to adapt and rebound in the face of academic and social pressures.

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