

EFFECT OF PEER SUPPORT GROUP ON ACADEMIC STRESS AMONG GRADE II VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS

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Background: Academic stress is a phenomenon that often occurs in school-age adolescents. Academic stress is a condition where students cannot face academic demands and perceive the academic demands as disturbances. Method: This research was conducted by a researcher who used student respondents who were divided into two intervention groups, 141 respondents, and a control group of 141 respondents. This study used by Zung Self-Rating Anxiety Scale (ZSRAS) questionnaire. In this research design was used by Quasi with a Control Group Pre-Post Test with Peer Support Group intervention. Sampling technique using by Simple Random Sampling using Lottery Technique with inclusion and eksklusion criteria of respondents and using analysis with SPSS using a Pearson product-moment correlation analysis test. Stress level in the control group was obtained $P = 0.513 > 0.05$, while stress level in the intervention group before and after intervention in the intervention group was obtained $P = 0.003 < 0.05$, differed in effect stress levels in control and intervention groups. Conclusion: Peer support groups can provide positive support to students who have experienced academic stress due to learning. It is a system for providing assistance with respect, shared responsibility, and mutual agreement, namely through support, friendship, empathy, sharing, and mutual assistance. Peer support groups provide social, emotional support, instrumental support and sharing in any condition in bringing about the desired social or personal change.

1. INTRODUCTION

World Health Organization (WHO) data shows that around 10% of children and adolescents throughout the world experience mental disorders, one of which is stress. (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2024). Increased stress that occurs in adolescents can disrupt the academic activities of adolescent students at school, 15-17. The prevalence of stress in the world is 38-71%. While in Indonesia, the prevalence of stress reaches 39.6-61.3%. This result is reinforced by research from the American Psychological Association (APA) students who experience stress at school ranges from 48% to 83%. (American Psychological Association, 2025). Stress that occurs in adolescents becomes a Global Burden Disease which causes problems in the form of physical health, well-being for individuals, and even end their lives. (Malatest International, 2022).

Stress that occurs will affect the psychology and physiology of adolescents. (Giani et al., 2022; Pfeiffer et al., 2024). According to Latifah (2022, stated that short-term impacts experienced by adolescents psychologically will experience conditions of anxiety, sadness, fear, and despair, behaviorally, stress, making students tremble, stutter, and become aggressive towards others. While long-term impact experienced students will show response decrease in endurance, depression, mental fatigue, and using cigarettes or alcohol to reduce stress that occurs during students' academic activities. (Latifah, 2022). Stress lasts for a very long time and has a very bad impact on students' achievement. Research from Pulungan, et.al (2024) revealed that stress that lasts for a very long time will affect emotional intelligence and disrupt disrupting effectiveness of adolescent activities. (Pulungan & Nurhayani, 2024). Stress can also cause

suicide in someone. What adolescents do to meet demands and resources is not balanced, causing stress, and the methods used to reduced stress (coping) (Rahmah et al., 2022). Coping strategies are strategies used to reduce stress levels. (Labelle et al., 2020).

Coping strategies are responses made by individuals when negative conditions occur or that can cause stressors. According to Clarissa & Saleh (2022, two coping strategies in reducing stress are emotion-focused and problem-focused coping. (Clarissa & Saleh, 2022). Individuals solving problems, overcoming changes and conditions threaten both cognitively and behaviorally. (O'Day, 2023). Coping strategies used by individuals include problem-focused coping (Problem Focused Coping), which focuses on solving problems is good, while emotion-focused coping (Emotional Focused Coping) focuses on emotions and is often used by individuals to solve problems. (Avramut et al., 2023).

Academic stress is a phenomenon that often occurs in school-age adolescents. Based on the results of a preliminary study conducted by researchers at SMK Bhakti Husada Kras Kediri on 42 students in grades II, it was found that 21 students experienced moderate stress, 16 students experienced mild stress, and 5 students experienced severe stress. From the questionnaire distributed, data were obtained on students who experienced stress levels requiring treatment and management on reducing stress levels and coping used by adolescents, based types of stress above. Academic stress is stress that is included in the distress category. Academic stress is a condition where students cannot face academic demands and perceive the academic demands as disturbances. Academic stressors are stress that stems from learning or things related to learning, which include: pressure to move up a class, long study time,

cheating, lots of assignments, getting test scores, bureaucracy, getting scholarships, decisions about majors and careers, and exam anxiety and time management. (Latifah, 2022).

Stress occurring in adolescent students requires serious and professional handling to reduce it. Stress on adolescent students can affect their physical and psychological aspects of adolescent students. In addition to interventions carried out by researchers in research on how to reduce and manage stress, has often been done using a pharmacological approach; meditation, hypnosis, and music are very helpful in reducing stress levels. In addition to approaches taken in managing stress, approaches are also carried out using health services by Peer Support Groups. Support groups are groups consisting of 4-12 people who routinely gather to share experiences, feelings, and provide support to each other regarding the same problems. (Pointon-Haas et al., 2024; Rahmah et al., 2022). Research by Pointon-Haas et al (2023) shows that support groups provide a safe space for adolescents to share concerns and difficulties in the learning process, so that adolescents do not feel alone dealing with academic stress due to learning at school. In addition, through peer support groups, adolescents can provide each other with mental support and positive feedback, share solutions, and strengthen each other when experiencing obstacles. (Pointon-Haas et al., 2023). Results from research by Richard et al 2022, participation in peer support groups has been proven to improve the psychological well-being of group members. Based on this study, it was found that supporting others, especially from peers, can increase happiness, self-esteem, and coping skills in adolescent students, as well as reduce symptoms of depression, anxiety, and loneliness. (Richard et al., 2022). Emotional

support provided reciprocally makes adolescent students more motivated and ready to face academic pressure. (Ayu et al., 2022; Bakar et al., 2025). Peer support groups have an important role in developing thinking patterns. (Bakar et al., 2025). Peer support groups can provide positive things. (Ayu et al., 2022; Salvirania & Fahrudin, 2022). Results study stated that support groups have a positive impact on students who experienced academic stress due to learning. Research conducted showed that developing peer support groups can help adolescent students manage academic stress during the learning process at school.

2. METODE

This research, conducted by a researcher, used 282 students as respondents, where respondents divided into two groups, namely intervention groups of 141 respondents and a control group of 141 respondents, conducted at SMK Bhakti Husada Kras Kediri. This study used the Zung Self-Rating Anxiety Scale (ZSRAS) questionnaire, consisting of 30 statements. Design in this study used by Quasi Experimental With Control Group Pre-Post Test design with Peer Support Group intervention. Sampling technique used: Simple Random Sampling using Lottery Technique or using random numbers on respondents who would be researched. Design research with Quasi Experimental with Control Group Pre-Post Test design dengan intervensi Peer Support Group. In this Study, using criteria of inclusion and exclusion were used. Inclusion criteria used were class II students, screening had been carried out using Zung Self-Rating Anxiety Scale (ZSRAS) questionnaire, and were willing to be research respondents, while exclusion criteria is Students aren't present when process is taking place, Students who are in the middle of field practice activities

and Students who refuse to be research respondents. And then, Statistical Tests using SPSS Version 26.0 for Windows were used in this study for Univariate and Bivariate data using the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis test.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This results from research conducted by researchers with the Effect of Peer Support Groups on Academic Stress Grade II Vocational High School Adolescents to determine the influence on stress levels of class II vocational high school students on age, gender, and how students deal with stress levels as follows:

Table 3.1 Respondent Characteristics Based on Age and Homogeneity Test of Intervention Group and Control Group on SMK.

Age	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max	P-value
Intervention	15,54	1,223	16	15	18	0,372
Control	15,56	1,291	16	15	18	

Results in Table 3.1 show that in by control group mean age of adolescents was 15.54 years, with a median of 16 years and a standard deviation of 1.223. While in the intervention group, the mean age of adolescents was 15.56 years, with a median of 16 years and a standard deviation of 1.291. The age of adolescents in both groups was close to the oldest age or maximum value. In the control and intervention groups, the youngest age of adolescents was 14 years, and the oldest age was 18 years. Table 3.1 shows the results of the homogeneity test (homogeneity of variance) obtained a value of $p = 0.370 > 0.05$, so it can be concluded that the age variable in the control group and the intervention group have the same variance (homogeneous)

The stages of adolescence are divided into 3, namely early adolescence, aged 10-13

years, middle adolescence, aged 14-16 years, and late adolescence 17-19 years. (Depkes RI, 2020). In this study, the age of adolescence is included in middle adolescence, where at this stage adolescents need friends, love themselves, make many friends, and experience confusion in choosing. (Putu Hari Suta et al., 2024; Rahmah et al., 2022).

Results of a study by the University of Maryland Medical Center (2020) revealed that adolescents are vulnerable to stress. (University Of Maryland Media Center (UMMC), 2022). Results of other studies from Pfeiffer et al. (2024 and Pointon-Haas et al. (2024 stated that adolescents are very vulnerable to experiencing very high stressors (Pfeiffer et al., 2024; Pointon-Haas et al., 2024). Stress that occurs during adolescence is psychosocial stress experienced by adolescents aged 17 years. This is the same as the results of an epidemiological study conducted by the American Institute of Stress, showing that adolescents aged 12-18 years in the United States often experience stress, namely 59.7% (American Institute of Stress, 2022).

On this research conducted, it was shown that age does not affect stress levels and coping mechanisms in adolescents in the research conducted. This is supported by research from Ayu et.al 2022, stating that stress experienced by adolescents comes from various sources. (Ayu et al., 2022). So that in adolescence, there is a great need for strengthening and unification to move towards adulthood, marked by the ability to think, have an interest in other people, and be more emotionally mature (Ayu et al., 2022). Higher aged adolescents, the more it will affect the coping mechanism in reducing stress levels. (Bakar et al., 2025)

**Table 3.2 Respondent Characteristics
Based on Gender and Homogeneity Test of
Intervention Group and Control Group
SMK.**

Gender	Control Group		Intervention Group		P-value
	F	%	F	%	
Male	104	74	106	75,5	0,987
Female	37	26	35	24,5	

Data from Table 3.2 above shows the gender of adolescents in the control and intervention groups. In the control group, the data obtained showed that the majority of adolescents were male, 104 (74%), and the fewest were female, 37 (26%). While in the intervention group, the number of adolescents was 106 (75.5%) male, and the fewest were female, 35 (24.5%). The majority of male students were more than female students. Data in table 3.2 above shows the results of the homogeneity test (homogeneity of variance) obtained a value of $p = 0.897 > 0.05$, so it can be concluded that the gender variable has by same variance (homogeneous).

In this study, the majority of respondents were male because the study was conducted at SMK Grade II, which is a major vocational school of interest to male students. Gender is one of the causes of stress during adolescence. (Jannah & Sugianto, 2022). Research results of Cahyadi (2024) and the Ministry of Health Indonesia (2020) revealed that men are more susceptible to experiencing stressors than women. (Cahyadi, 2024; Sohrabi C, Alsafi Z, O'Neill N, Khan M, Kerwan A, Al-Jabir A, Iosifidis C, 2022). Results on research by Rahmah et al (2022) stated that psychosocial stress experienced by many men is very severe. (Rahmah et al., 2022). The difference from other studies is that female adolescents are more susceptible to stress. (Verma & Shukla, 2023). The Prevalence of stress among adolescent girls has increased significantly.

Results of this research conducted by Pfeiffer et al. (2024 and Pointon-Haas et al. (2024 showed that gender has a relationship with psychosocial stress and depression. (Pfeiffer et al., 2024; Pointon-Haas et al., 2024). From the two studies mentioned on adolescent girls are very vulnerable to experiencing very high stressors. Women in dealing with stress are more towards self-actualization, while in men it often causes helplessness and tends to use things that can influence adolescent behavior that is not good. (Jannah & Sugianto, 2022; Pfeiffer et al., 2024; Pointon-Haas et al., 2023, 2024).

Results of this research report by Husni et al 2024 showed that gender influences a person's coping. (Husni et al., 2024). Results of other studies show there are differences on reducing stress levels in women, who tend to have very high stress levels compared to men. (Oktaviana & Mardianto, 2024; Richard et al., 2022). The results of this research, which has been conducted, show that gender does not influence stress levels and coping mechanisms in adolescents and contrary to existing research, namely that gender does not influence stress levels in adolescents.

**Table 3.3 Respondent Characteristics
Based on Stress Levels in Intervention
Group and Control Group of Class II
Adolescents in SMK.**

Group	Treatment	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Control	Before	19,80	21	3,263	14	33
	After	20,30	21	4,076	14	33
Intervention	Before	18,99	18	3,456	14	33
	After	15,87	15	3,565	14	33

Results of Table 3.3 show that in the control group, the mean stress level before the intervention was 19.80, the median value was 20, and the standard deviation was 3.263. After the intervention, the mean stress level was 20.30, the median value was 20, and the standard deviation was 4.076. In the

control group, before and after the intervention, stress level tended to approach the highest value or maximum value, with the lowest stress level value being 14 and the highest value being 33. In the control group, there was an increase of 0.5. In the intervention group before the intervention, the mean stress level was 18.99, the median value was 18 and the standard deviation value was 3.456. After the intervention, the mean stress level was 15.88, the median value was 14, and the standard deviation value was 3.566. The stress level before the intervention tended to approach the highest value or maximum stress level, and after the intervention tended to decrease or approach the minimum value.

In the intervention group, before and after the intervention, the lowest stress level was 14 and the highest was 33. In the intervention group, there was a decrease in stress levels of 3.12. So it can be concluded that there is a difference between the intervention group and the control group before and after the intervention.

From research results conducted by researchers, peer support Groups can provide a positive influence on adolescents. Peer support groups or support groups are one method of group support therapy among fellow victims or people with the same problems or the same experiences. (Nuraeni & Ariani, 2022). Peer support groups or peer groups are a form of social relationship that is built and originates from peers; in this case, they will offer help to other friends when they experience difficulties. (Ayu et al., 2022). Peer Support Group is a system in providing assistance with respect, shared responsibility and mutual agreement, namely through support, friendship, empathy, sharing, and mutual assistance, in this case peer support groups are able to provide social emotional support, instrumental support and sharing in any condition in bringing about the desired social or personal change. Peer support group interventions are able to improve a person's ability to deal with situations and conditions

that will reduce the risk of academic stress in learning. Peer support group interventions are expected to be able to change behavior due to stress levels and are able to reduce stress levels in adolescents who experience academic stress or other stressors.

Table 3.4 Effect of Peer Support Group on Adolescent Stress Levels Before and After Intervention Grade II Adolescents.

Group	Treatment	Mean	SD	Min	Max	P=Value
Control	Before	19,80	3,262	14	33	0,513
	After	20,30	4,075	14	33	
Intervention	Before	18,17	3,458	14	33	0,004
	After	15,85	3,568	14	33	

Result tada on table 3.4 showing analysis of the Effect of Peer Support Group on stress levels before and after in the control and intervention groups. Stress level in the control group was obtained, $P = 0.513 > 0.05$, so it can be concluded that the control group had no difference in stress levels before and after the intervention. While the tree level in the intervention group before and after intervention in the intervention group was obtained, $P = 0.003 < 0.05$, so the conclusion that can be drawn is that in the intervention group, there was a significant difference in stress levels before and after intervention.

This study used intervention Peer Support Group intervention to reduce stress levels and increase students' coping mechanisms towards more positive ones. Peer Support Group is very influential in reducing stress levels, and students' coping mechanisms are more effective in adolescents. Results of this study are in accordance with the purpose of the study, which is to see the effect of Peer Support Group intervention on reducing stress levels in adolescents.

Factors that influence the success of this study are the strategies used in Peer Support Groups for adolescents. Implementation of Peer Support Groups cannot be separated

from social support and social learning theory in improving students' abilities and independence by increasing students' knowledge and experience of stress levels and coping mechanisms of each group member. Social support is an exchange of existing resources as a goal of improving the welfare of each individual by providing assistance, encouragement, acceptance, and attention (Barret et al., 2024; Dai et al., 2023; Hawsawi et al., 2025). Social support provided will be able to improve mental health and protect against stress (Nidup et al., 2022; Emran et al., 2024). Results of this study are supported by research by Pfeiffer et al., 2024 that adolescents who have adequate social support will be able to reduce stress levels (Pfeiffer et al., 2024). Social support affects managing academic stress that occurs in adolescents (Laksmiwati & Tondok, 2023; Li et al., 2025).

Social support has a relationship with reducing stress and the use of coping strategies. (Laksmiwati & Tondok, 2023; Lu et al., 2023; He et al., 2025). Social support will help adolescents in obtaining information, experiences experienced by individuals in reducing stress levels and student coping strategies. Social support can increase adolescent interaction in seeking help to reduce stress levels. (Awad et al., 2022; Rahmayanti & Nashori, 2024). Another study that supports this is the results of Knight's research (2006, which revealed that every member who received advice and support from other members will be able to provide support to members in the group. (Verma & Shukla, 2023).

Social learning theory is a learning process that is created when someone observes and imitates the behavior of others. Someone will learn to change their behavior by seeing someone or a group of people with certain stimuli. Learning is an observation of the cognitive process that involves all

attributes in humans, such as language, morality, thinking, and self-regulation of a person's behavior. (Verma & Shukla, 2023). This is in accordance with Giani et al., 2022, stating that Social Learning Theory is a concept that determines each other (reciprocal determinism), without any reinforcement. (Giani et al., 2022). Human behavior is a reciprocal interaction that occurs continuously between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental aspects, where people will influence each other, and each person will influence behavior by controlling the environment.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that there is an Effect on stress levels in class II adolescents at SMK Bhakti Husada Kras Kediri in the control group and intervention group. In control group before intervention, stress level with a Mean value of 19.80 and after intervention there was an increase in Mean value of 20.30 in this case there was a difference from Mean value of 0.5, in this case it shows that there was an increased of 0.5 in control group on stress level of class II students at SMK Bhakti Husada Kras Kediri, while in intervention group that was given a peer support group before intervention mean value was 18.17 and mean value after the peer support group intervention mean value was 15.85, there was a difference in mean value of 2.32, in this case difference in mean value shows that peer support group intervention can reduced the stress level of class II students at SMK Bhakti Husada Kras Kediri. Peer intervention can reduce the level of academic stress of second-grade students, and peer support group intervention can also improve adolescent coping in managing stress through positive coping. So in carrying out nursing interventions, peer support groups as interventions that can be used intervention in managing stress and

improving individual coping to better in stress. Research conducted using peer support group intervention is expected to reduce the level of academic stress of second-grade students and can be used as other and broader research.

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