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## Perceived Peer Support, Autonomy and Self-Esteem Among Boarding School Students

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### Abstract

*This study conducted to investigate perceived peer support and autonomy among boarding school students and its correlation with their self-esteem. Among 131 students from two selected boarding schools been the participant of this study. The researchers applied quantitative method in collecting data. The questionnaire adopted for this research was developed by Yueming Jia et al, (2009) and Way et al. (2007). The data shows that boarding school students perceived high level of peer support and autonomy. This due to amount of time they spend together in school hours and in the dormitory. They got the chances to to get involved in the decision-making process of the school like school regulation, teaching-learning activities and sports among classes. However, the study also found that there is no correlation between perceived peer support, autonomy and boarding school students' self-esteem. This finding contradicted former studies which shows that social interaction with peer partly affect students' mental health and self-esteem.*

**Keywords:** Peer Support, Autonomy, Self-esteem, Boarding School Students

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## INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we investigated the correlation between peer support and autonomy with boarding school students' self-esteem in Aceh, Indonesia. Peer support and Autonomy is one of many school climate elements. According to school Reddy, Rhodes and Mulhall (2003), perceived school climate affects students' self esteem. They further argued that students who feel rejected by peer might have a low score of self-esteem, while students' who feel accepted by peer have a high score of self-esteem. In addition, senior high school students aged 16-18 years old are categorized as adolescents who are undergoing the identity searching phase in their lives and experience turbulent period of a human life (Way, Reddy & Rhodes, 2007). Therefore, they do need peer support and autonomy, as well as high score of self-esteem in struggling the turbulent period.

Furthermore, students who experience the decrease of peer support will also experience a decline in self-esteem and an increase in depressive symptoms (Jia, Ling, Chen, Hughes, Ke, and Lu, 2009). Therefore, educationalist should pay more attention on perceived peer support and autonomy in teaching and learning process, as well as students' psychological adjustment. Students perceiving negative school climate such as a low level of peer support and autonomy but scoring high on self-esteem will more likely to get involved in bullying (Gendron, Williams & Guera, 2011). They further explained that students perceiving positive school climate such as a high level of peer support and autonomy will less likely to get involved in bullying. Additionally, if the students' perceived low level of peer support and autonomy, they are more likely to skip teaching and learning process, to become unmotivated student and to have behavioral problems. As the result, we would like to examine students' perception of peer support and autonomy and to investigate the correlation between Peer Support and Autonomy with Students' self-esteem.

In order to create positive school climate, peer support and autonomy students perceived during school hours, as well as students' self-esteem are important subject to studied. It might result to higher motivation and higher academic achievement. For parents, it will be the confidence in nurturing their children choosing the community or school for children development. Peer support and autonomy which means the extent to which students enjoy team-work and get the chance to make decisions or to voice their opinion in the school (Way et al., 2007). Some researchers point out that peer relationships are positively correlated with middle school students' psychological and behavioural adjustments. Urberg, Luo, Pilgrim and Degirmencioglu (2003) argue that the acceptance of peers may result in adolescents' adaptation to conform to their peers' behaviours.

Additionally, according to G.H Ramsdal, (2008), Self-Esteem is defined as the answer to the question "Who are we?" and "what we do?". In this study, self esteem defined as how a student perceives himself/herself confidence in thinking and dealing with problems. As the result, it defined either positive or negative attitudes that students hold toward themselves.

Several scholars have described the definition of self-esteem. According to Rosenberg (1965), self esteem is defined as either the positive or negative attitudes that an individual holds towards himself. According to Murberg and Bru (2004), adolescence is a transition period in which adolescents experience changes in terms of physiological, cognitive and social life. Senior high school students are considered as adolescents who are 12-19 years old, therefore, they experience those changes. Jackman and MacPhee (2015) found that adolescents' self-esteem partially mediated the future orientation and future risk behaviours. It plays a role as protective factor against adolescents' involvement in risky behaviours. Furthermore, Adam et al. (2006) state that self-esteem has a great role in one's development since it is considered as an important maker of general well being. In addition, Boyd and Bee (2015) argue that high self-esteem is related with positive development outcome such as the ability to be a person that is able to resist peer pressure, get high grades at school, and rarely depressed. In short, psychological adjustment during adolescence has significant relationship with adolescents' future life.

Interestingly, Zhang et al. (2012) state that social interaction with peer partly affects students' mental health. Peer victimization, for instance, leads to either physical or verbal bullies. This kind of negative peer relationship is associated with the increase of psychopathology. Furthermore,



Gendron, Williams and Guerra (2011) support this by arguing that school climate including peer relationship moderate bullying perpetration among students. Therefore, peer relationship not only affects students' academic achievement but also students' psychology.

In terms of students autonomy, Yueming Jia et al. (2009) reported that Chinese students perceived higher opportunity for autonomy compared to American Students. In the classroom, Chinese students have several chances to get involved in the decision making process about school regulation, and teaching-learning activities. Furthermore, they also gain the chance to arrange several sport matches among classes and assist teachers in handling some group discussions. Those kinds of opportunities rarely happen among American students. Interestingly, that kind of autonomous students-expression and decision making are the requirement for successful students development (Roeser et al., 2000 as cited in Yueming Jia et al., 2009). To sum up, peer relationship or peer support as well as autonomy really determine either positive or negative perception of the school climate and do affect students' development.

There are several senior high schools both boarding and non-boarding schools in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. Some researched studied the effect of peer support on several psychological aspect among nonboarding school students. This research pay more detail on the effect of perceived peer support and autonomy on boarding school students' self-esteem. Boarding school students spend a large amount of time with their peers, teachers and active in severals on going activities in the dormitory (Papworth & Ginns, 2016). It probably provide chance to build personal realtionship among school members; friends and teachers. Therefore, the researcher would like to investigate peer support and autonomy perceived by boarding school students' and it correlation with their self-esteem.

## RESEARCH METHODS

A quantitative cross sectional is the method applied this study to answer the research questions. Banda Aceh, Indonesia, is area of this study. The students of two selected boarding schools are respondents of the study which consisted of 131 students from grade 3 majoring both social science and natural science. The researcher adopted the questionnaire developed by Way et al. (2007) and Yueming Jia et al (2009) in collecting the data.

The items of the questionnaire are categorized as peer support and autonomy, and self-esteem. The data collected were analyzed by using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) software package. Two procedures used namely descriptive analysis and pearson correlation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the firs research question was perceived peer support and autonomy among boarding school students. Boarding school students' responses are presented in the table 1.

Table 1 Distributions of Boarding School Students' Responses

No.	Items	% of Boarding School Responses		
		SA & A	N	SD & D
<b>Peer Support and Autonomy</b>				
1.	Students in this school felt that they need each other.	80.1	14.5	5.3
2.	Students in this school get to know each other really well.	77.9	16.8	5.3
3.	There are some students who select other students to be their friends.	47.3	31.3	21.4
4.	Students get to help decide some of the rules in this school.	43.5	37.4	19.1

Note: SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), (N) Neutral, SD (Strongly Disagree), D (Disagree)

Majority of the boarding school students felt that they need each other (80.1%). In addition, 77.9% of the students confirmed that they get to know each other really well. This was followed by two items respectively in which they agreed that there are some students who select other students to be their friends (47.3%), and they get to help decide some of the rules in this school (43.5%). However, there are also some students who disagreed with the items measuring peer



support ranging between 5.3% and 19.1% of them. The overall finding shows that majority of the students perceived high peer support and autonomy with the average agreement at 62%.

Secondly, the correlation between peer support, autonomy and students' self-esteem are presented in the table below;

Table 2 Correlation Matrix

	Self-Esteem	Peer Support
SE	Pearson Correlation 1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
PS	Pearson Correlation .143	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.104

Note: \*statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$  level, PS = Peer Support and Autonomy, SE = Self-Esteem.

The data shows that among the boarding school students, there was no significant correlation between peer support and self-esteem in which correlation coefficient indicates  $r = 0.143$  and  $p$  value =  $0.104$ , which means  $p = 0.104 > 0.05$ .

To sum up, majority of boarding school students reported that they received more peer support and autonomy. This finding is in line with Yueming Jia et al. (2009) study which showed that the amount of opportunities students have to interact with classmates enhance the feeling of peer support. Boarding school students interact with their classmates all day. Furthermore, boarding school students have many chances to get involved in the decision-making process of the school like school regulation, teaching-learning activities and organizing extramural activities and sports among classes. However, the significant level of peer support had no correlation with students' self esteem. This result contradicted a study conducted by Zhang et al. (2012) which reported that social interaction with peer partly affect students' mental health. Peer victimization, for instance, leads to either physical or verbal bully. They further argued that negative peer relationship is associated with the increase of psychopathology. Hence, for these students, peer support has no relationship with their self-esteem. This finding also was not in line with the idea of Bint-E Tahir, Inam and Raana (2015) who reported that there was a significant relationship between social support and self-esteem.

## CONCLUSION

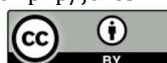
Boarding school students perceived high level of peer support and autonomy. They spend the amount of time together and have the opportunities to interact with classmates hence it enhance the feeling of peer support. Boarding school students interact with their classmates all day, not only in the classroom but also in the residence or dormitory. Furthermore, boarding school students have many chances to get involved in the decision-making process of the school like school regulation, teaching-learning activities and sports among classes. However, there is no correlation between perceived peer support, autonomy and students' self-esteem. This finding contradicted former studies which show show that social interaction with peer partly affect students' mental health and self-esteem.

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