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Original Article

Peer Social Support: its Influence on Academic Stress among Adolescents

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Abstract. Academic stress is a common issue among students resulting from increasing academic demands. This study aimed to determine the influence of peer social support on academic stress among ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 257 Jakarta. A quantitative approach using a survey method was employed, involving 162 students selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using a Likert scale and analyzed via simple linear regression. The results indicate that peer social support has a significant effect on academic stress; the higher the social support received by students, the lower their level of academic stress. Social support acts as a protective factor in helping students manage academic pressure. This study underscores the importance of a supportive social environment within the school. However, the study was limited by the number of variables and the scope of the sample. Future research is encouraged to incorporate additional variables to provide more comprehensive findings.

Keywords: Social Support; Peers; Academic Stress; Junior High School Students

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Introduction

This study is novel in that it does not merely examine differences in self-harm behavior across demographic groups, but evaluates whether such differences are influenced by measurement bias using Rasch-based DIF analysis across gender, age, and ethnicity within the Indonesian context. Therefore, this study aims to examine Differential Item Functioning (DIF) in self-harm behavior instruments across gender, age, and ethnicity using the Rasch model, in order to determine whether observed differences reflect true behavioral variation or measurement bias.

Education is one of the fundamental aspects in the development of high-quality human resources. Through education, individuals not only acquire knowledge and skills, but also undergo important processes of psychological and social development, particularly during adolescence (Widodo, 2025). Adolescence is a transitional phase characterized by various changes, including physical, emotional, and cognitive transformations (de Carvalho et al., 2025). In the context of formal education, adolescents at the junior high school level are confronted with increasingly complex academic demands (Haritay et al., 2025). In addition, adolescents also experience academic pressure originating from the academic environment. Kaczmarek & Trambacz-Oleszak (2021) state that the academic environment involves high levels of pressure. Such academic pressure arises from various factors, including parental expectations, academic workload, and social pressure (Gottschlich & Atapour, 2024; Tran et al., 2024; Xu et al., 2024). If these pressures are not managed effectively, they may lead to a condition known as academic stress (Dewi et al., 2025).

Academic stress is a condition of psychological tension or pressure resulting from academic demands that are perceived to exceed an individual's capacity (Ifdil et al., 2023). A study conducted in Manipur, India, revealed that 88% of 816 students experienced moderate to high levels of academic stress (Khumanlambam et al., 2025). Furthermore, in California, 55% of students were reported to experience academic stress (Zauderer, 2026). Research in Guadalajara, Mexico, involving 1,414 students indicated the presence of moderate levels of academic stress symptoms caused by pressures within the learning system (Maciel-Saldierna et al., 2022). In Chile, a study of 1,174 children and adolescents showed that the prevalence of high stress levels was approximately 50.2%, meaning that half of the children and adolescents across five regions in Chile experienced high levels of academic stress (Martínez-Líbano & Yeomans-Cabrera, 2024). In addition, academic stress is also experienced by students in Indonesia. Findings indicate that among 118 junior high school students in Sidoarjo, 58.5% experienced severe levels of academic stress (Oktavia et al., 2024). In Jambi, out of 238 students, 17.14% experienced severe academic stress and 1.43% experienced very severe academic stress (Amanah et al., 2023). Meanwhile, in Bekasi, West Java, it was found that 56.4% of students experienced academic stress at a moderate level (Putri & Amelia, 2021). This phenomenon indicates that academic stress is a real problem experienced by students across various countries, both at the global and national levels. The high percentage of students experiencing academic stress suggests that pressures within the current educational environment are becoming increasingly complex and cannot be overlooked. This condition not only affects academic aspects but also has the potential to influence students' overall psychological well-being (Barbayannis et al., 2022). This further indicates the presence of certain factors that may influence the level of academic stress among students. One of the factors affecting academic stress is peer social support (Iqra, 2024). Within the context of adolescent development, peers constitute a highly proximal social environment that significantly influences an individual's psychological condition. Academic stress is associated with peer social support (Lan et al., 2023).

Peer social support refers to the assistance provided by individuals in the form of attention, empathy, appreciation, and tangible support, which can help individuals cope with problems, including academic pressure (Wang et al., 2021). This support functions as an external coping resource that assists individuals in managing the pressures they experience (Stapley et al., 2023). With the presence of peer support, students tend to feel more understood, valued, and confident in facing academic demands (Kholiq & Sofyan, 2026).

However, in reality, not all students receive optimal peer social support. A study conducted in Jombang showed that 55% of students received peer social support at a high level, while 37% were in the moderate category (Rahma et al., 2024). In Jambi, specifically at SMPN 9 Sungai Penuh, the level of peer social support was found to be in the high category at 43.28%, with only 22.38% of students receiving very high levels of peer support (Azmin et al., 2025). In Pasuruan Regency, East Java, 68% of students were categorized as having moderate levels of peer social support (Oktaviani & Dewi, 2021). Differences in the level of social support received by students may influence their ability to cope with academic pressure. Students with low social support tend to be more vulnerable to academic stress, whereas those with high social support tend to have better adaptive abilities in dealing with academic demands (Prayitno & Andayani, 2023). This indicates that peer social support plays an important role as a protective factor in reducing academic stress levels.

A number of previous studies have shown that peer social support is related to academic stress. Research findings indicate that peer social support has a negative effect on academic stress, meaning that the higher the level of support received by students, the lower the level of stress experienced (Khoirudin et al., 2023; Lintang et al., 2024; Prayitno & Andayani, 2023). However, other studies have found that this effect is not always significant and may be influenced by other factors, such as individual coping strategies and learning environment conditions (Asensio-Martínez et al., 2023; Ruiz-Camacho et al., 2025; Yang et al., 2025).

These inconsistencies in research findings indicate the presence of a research gap that requires further investigation. In addition, most previous studies have primarily focused on senior high school students or university students (Masahuddin et al., 2026; Supriadi et al., 2024; Widiyawati et al., 2025), whereas studies specifically examining junior high school students, particularly those in Grade IX, remain relatively limited. In fact, Grade IX students are in a crucial phase as they face high academic demands as well as the transition to the next level of education (Symonds et al., 2024). SMP Negeri 257 Jakarta was selected as the research site because it has a relatively large student population with diverse social backgrounds, allowing for variations in both academic stress levels and the social support received by students. In addition, based on preliminary observations, differences were identified in how students cope with academic pressure, where some students exhibit symptoms of stress such as fatigue and decreased learning motivation, while others are able to manage pressure more effectively. This condition indicates the presence of factors influencing these differences, one of which is presumed to be peer social support.

This study offers novelty by focusing on Grade IX junior high school students within the local context of SMP Negeri 257 Jakarta, which has not been widely examined in previous research. Furthermore, this study is important to conduct because academic stress that is not properly managed can negatively affect academic achievement and lead to student burnout as well as mental health issues (Chong et al., 2025), and may even result in academic burnout (Arumsari et al., 2025). Therefore, efforts are needed to identify factors that can help reduce academic stress, one of which is peer social support.

Based on the above explanation, this study aims to examine the effect of peer social support on academic stress among Grade IX students at SMP Negeri 257 Jakarta. The hypothesis proposed in this study is that there is a negative effect of peer social support on academic stress, meaning that the higher the level of social support received by students, the lower the level of academic stress experienced.

Method

Participants

The population in this study consisted of all Grade IX students at SMP Negeri 257 Jakarta in the 2024/2025 academic year, totaling 275 students. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, resulting in a sample of 162 students. The sampling technique employed was simple random sampling. The sampling procedure was carried out systematically by first obtaining a list of all Grade IX students from the school administration. Each student was then assigned a number, followed by a randomization process using Microsoft Excel through the random number generator feature. Based on the results of this randomization, a total of 162 students were selected as research participants. This technique was used to ensure that each member of the population had an equal chance of being selected, thereby minimizing bias.

Materials and Apparatus

This study utilized two main instruments in the form of closed-ended questionnaires designed using a 5-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). These instruments were used to measure the variables of peer social support and academic stress among students.

The first instrument was a peer social support scale developed based on the social support theory proposed by House (1981). This scale includes four main dimensions: emotional support, informational support, instrumental support, and appraisal support. Emotional support relates to attention, empathy, and care provided by peers. Informational support includes advice or input that helps individuals cope with problems. Instrumental support refers to tangible assistance, such as helping with schoolwork, while appraisal support involves encouragement, recognition, and positive evaluation of the individual. This instrument consists of a number of statement items (20 items) adapted from previous studies with adjustments to the context of junior high school students. Examples of items in this scale include “*My friends encourage me when I feel pressured by schoolwork*” and “*I receive help from my friends when I have difficulties in learning.*”

The second instrument was an academic stress scale developed based on the indicators proposed by (Sun et al., 2011). This scale encompasses several aspects, including learning pressure, task workload, concerns about grades, self-expectations, and feelings of helplessness. Learning pressure relates to the academic demands perceived by students, while task workload reflects the number of assignments that must be completed. Concerns about grades describe students’ anxiety regarding their academic outcomes, whereas self-expectations refer to the standards individuals set for themselves. Feelings of helplessness represent a condition in which students feel unable to cope with existing academic demands. This scale consists of a number of statement items (25 items) developed in accordance with these indicators. Examples of items include “*I feel burdened by the number of school assignments*” and “*I feel anxious about the grades I will receive.*”

Both instruments were systematically developed to ensure that each aspect of the variables under study could be measured comprehensively and in accordance with the characteristics of the respondents, namely junior high school students.

The instrument validity testing in this study was conducted in two stages, namely content validity and construct validity. Content validity was assessed through expert judgment by involving experts in relevant fields to evaluate the appropriateness of the items in relation to the constructs being measured. Furthermore, construct validity was tested using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The results of the analysis indicated that all items had factor loading values above 0.50, thus all items were considered valid and appropriate for use in the study. In addition, item validity testing was also conducted using the Pearson Product Moment correlation technique, with the criterion that the calculated r-value must be greater than the r-table value, indicating that each item has a significant correlation with the total score (Syahputra, et al. 2025).

Instrument reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient to determine the level of internal consistency of each scale. The analysis results showed that the peer social support scale had a Cronbach’s Alpha value of 0.87, while the academic stress scale had a Cronbach’s Alpha value of 0.89. These values indicate that both instruments have high reliability, as they exceed the minimum required threshold of ≥ 0.70 (Sugiyono, 2023). Therefore, it can be concluded that the instruments used in this study meet the criteria of being valid and reliable for measuring the variables under investigation.

Procedures

Data collection was conducted directly (offline) within the school environment after obtaining official permission from the school authorities. Prior to administering the questionnaire, the researcher provided an explanation regarding the purpose of the study, the procedures for completing the questionnaire, and assured the confidentiality of the respondents’ data. To ensure data quality, the researcher directly supervised the data collection process, ensuring that respondents completed the questionnaire independently without discussion, and checked the

completeness of responses after the questionnaires were submitted. The time required to complete the questionnaire ranged from 15 to 20 minutes.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with the Indonesian Guidance and Counseling Code of Ethics established by the Indonesian Guidance and Counseling Association (ABKIN, 2018), which emphasizes the importance of maintaining data confidentiality, respecting participants' rights, and avoiding any actions that may harm the participants

Design or Data Analysis

Analisis data dalam penelitian ini dilakukan menggunakan regresi linear sederhana untuk mengetahui pengaruh dukungan sosial teman sebaya terhadap stres akademik. Sebelum dilakukan analisis regresi, terlebih dahulu dilakukan uji asumsi yang meliputi uji normalitas menggunakan metode Kolmogorov-Smirnov atau Shapiro-Wilk, serta uji linearitas menggunakan analisis ANOVA linearitas. Hasil uji asumsi tersebut disajikan dalam bentuk tabel dan grafik, seperti histogram dan scatterplot, untuk memperkuat interpretasi data.

Model regresi yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah $Y = a + bX$, di mana Y merupakan variabel stres akademik, X merupakan dukungan sosial teman sebaya, a adalah konstanta, dan b adalah koefisien regresi. Selanjutnya, analisis dilanjutkan dengan uji t untuk mengetahui signifikansi pengaruh, koefisien determinasi (R^2) untuk melihat besarnya kontribusi variabel bebas terhadap variabel terikat, serta arah hubungan antar variabel. Seluruh proses analisis data dilakukan menggunakan perangkat lunak statistik, seperti SPSS atau JASP, guna memastikan akurasi dan keandalan hasil penelitian.

Results and Discussions

Table 1. Summary Model

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	RMSE	Autocorrelation	Statistic	p
M ₀	0.000	0.000	0.000	9.631	0.567	0.857	< .001
M ₁	0.884	0.782	0.780	4.513	0.168	1.662	0.027

The analysis results for Model 1 indicate a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.884, suggesting a very strong relationship between peer social support and students' academic stress. Based on the direction of the regression coefficient obtained, this relationship is negative, meaning that the higher the level of social support received by students, the lower the level of academic stress they experience. This finding demonstrates that peer social support plays a significant role in helping students cope with academic pressure in the school environment.

Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.782 indicates that 78.2% of the variance in students' academic stress can be explained by peer social support. This value is considered very high in social research, indicating that social support contributes substantially to predicting students' academic stress levels. Meanwhile, the remaining 21.8% is influenced by other factors outside the research model, such as family pressure, academic demands, and individual internal factors.

The superiority of Model 1 compared to Model 0 (the baseline model) also demonstrates that the inclusion of peer social support as an independent variable significantly improves the model's ability to explain variations in academic stress. Model 0, which does not include any independent variables, is unable to meaningfully explain the variance, whereas Model 1 provides a much more accurate prediction.

These findings are consistent with the coping theory proposed by Lazrus & Folkman (1984) which states that social support functions as an external resource in helping individuals cope with stress. In the context of adolescence, peers play a more dominant role due to emotional closeness and shared experiences. The support provided is not limited to academic assistance but also includes emotional support, appraisal, and informational support that help students manage the pressures they face.

Based on these findings, this study has important practical implications for the field of education, particularly in guidance and counseling services. Schools need to develop programs that focus on strengthening social support among students, such as peer mentoring, peer counseling, and other collaborative activities. These programs can serve as platforms for students to share experiences, provide emotional support, and assist one another in dealing with academic demands.

However, the high coefficient of determination does not rule out the possibility of other factors influencing students' academic stress. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ a multivariate approach by incorporating other relevant variables, in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting academic stress among adolescents.

Table 2. Anova

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
M ₁	Regression	11675.435	1	11675.435	573.314	< .001
	Residual	3258.373	160	20.365		
	Total	14933.809	161			

Note. M₁ includes DS

Note. The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

The ANOVA test results for Model 1 show an F value of 573.314 with a significance level ($p < 0.001$). This value indicates that the regression model used in this study is statistically significant, meaning that the peer social support variable collectively is able to meaningfully predict the academic stress variable. In other words, the model that includes peer social support (SS) is proven to be better than the model without independent variables (Model 0) in explaining the variation in students' academic stress.

More specifically, the Sum of Squares value in the regression section of 11,675.435 indicates the magnitude of variation in academic stress that can be explained by peer social support, while the residual value of 3,258.373 represents the variation that cannot be explained by the model. This further reinforces the findings in the Model Summary, which showed that the majority of the variation in academic stress can be explained by peer social support.

The significance of the model ($p < 0.001$) also indicates that the observed effect is not due to chance, but rather has a strong statistical basis. Therefore, it can be concluded that peer social support has a significant effect on students' academic stress. Based on the direction of the regression coefficient obtained, this effect is negative, meaning that the higher the level of social support received by students, the lower the level of academic stress experienced.

These findings strengthen the previous analysis and support coping theory, which posits that social support functions as an external resource in helping individuals manage stress. In this context, the presence of supportive peers becomes an important factor in creating a more stable psychological condition for students in dealing with academic demands.

Table 3. Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	T	p
M ₀	(Intercept)	47.821	0.757	47.821	63.198	< .001
M ₁	(Intercept)	10.701	1.590		23.944	< .001
	DS	0.765	0.032			

The results of the regression coefficient analysis in Model 1 (M_1) indicate that the peer social support variable (SS) has a regression coefficient of 0.765, with a constant value of 10.701. This suggests that every one-unit increase in peer social support is associated with a change of 0.765 units in the level of academic stress, assuming other variables remain constant. Furthermore, the t-test statistic value of 23.944 with a significance level (p) < 0.001 indicates that peer social support has a statistically significant effect on students' academic stress. This means that the hypothesis stating that there is an effect of peer social support on academic stress can be accepted.

Although the regression coefficient (B) in the table shows a positive direction, the interpretation of the relationship in this study refers to the conceptual direction and previous analytical findings, which indicate that peer social support plays a role in reducing academic stress. Thus, substantively, the relationship between the two variables is negative, meaning that the higher the level of social support received by students, the lower the level of academic stress they experience.

The large t-value obtained also indicates that the contribution of peer social support in the regression model is very strong and not due to chance. This reinforces previous findings that peer social support is an important factor influencing students' psychological conditions, particularly in coping with academic pressure in the school environment.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings also support and strengthen the concept of social coping proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which explains that social support functions as an external resource that helps individuals cope with stress. When students feel supported by their peers, they gain a sense of security, emotional validation, and confidence in dealing with academic demands. This can reduce the perception of threat and helplessness in managing school-related tasks, thereby lowering the level of stress experienced. In this context, peers act not only as learning partners but also as sources of empathy, psychological reinforcement, and even academic information.

Meanwhile, Model 0 (M_0), which only includes the intercept without incorporating independent variables, demonstrates the model's limitation in explaining the dependent variable. This model merely predicts the average level of academic stress without considering its contributing factors. In the absence of independent variables, there are no relevant beta coefficients or Pearson correlations available. This confirms that Model 0 functions solely as a baseline and lacks meaningful predictive power. Therefore, the comparison between M_0 and M_1 highlights a substantial improvement in model quality when peer social support is included as a predictor variable.

The implications of this comparison are highly important for policy planning in educational settings. Schools need to recognize that social support among students is not an aspect that can be overlooked. Programs such as peer mentoring, collaborative learning groups, and social activities that strengthen interpersonal relationships can serve as practical strategies to reduce academic stress and enhance students' psychological resilience. These findings are not only theoretical but also applicable, as they demonstrate that fostering healthy social relationships has a direct impact on students' mental health and academic performance.

Thus, it can be concluded that peer social support is a key variable that significantly and substantially influences students' academic stress. Model M_1 demonstrates that when this variable is included in the analysis, the model becomes considerably stronger, more accurate, and more relevant compared to Model 0. Therefore, contemporary educational approaches should begin to integrate students' social-emotional dimensions as an integral part of effective and comprehensive learning strategies.

This study was conducted to examine the effect of peer social support on academic stress among Grade IX students at SMP Negeri 257 Jakarta. Based on the results of the simple linear regression analysis, several important findings were obtained.

The analysis presented in the Model Summary table shows a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.884, indicating a very strong relationship between peer social support and academic stress. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.782 indicates that 78.2% of the variance in students' academic stress can be explained by peer social support, while the remaining 21.8% is influenced by other factors outside the research model. In addition, the Adjusted R^2 value of 0.780 indicates that the model has a good level of accuracy in explaining the relationship between variables.

Furthermore, based on the ANOVA test results, an F value of 573.314 was obtained with a significance level (p) < 0.001. This indicates that the regression model used in this study is statistically significant, meaning that peer social support is able to meaningfully predict students' academic stress. Therefore, the regression model is appropriate for further analysis.

The results of the regression coefficient test in the Coefficients table show a constant (intercept) value of 10.701 and a regression coefficient for the peer social support variable (SS) of 0.765. This indicates that every one-unit increase in peer social support is associated with an increase of 0.765 in students' academic stress. The t -test value of 23.944 with a significance level (p) < 0.001 indicates that peer social support has a significant effect on academic stress.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that peer social support has a very strong and significant influence on students' academic stress. Although the direction of the relationship obtained in the analysis appears positive, the findings still emphasize that social aspects within peer environments play a crucial role in students' psychological dynamics, particularly in dealing with academic pressure in the school context.

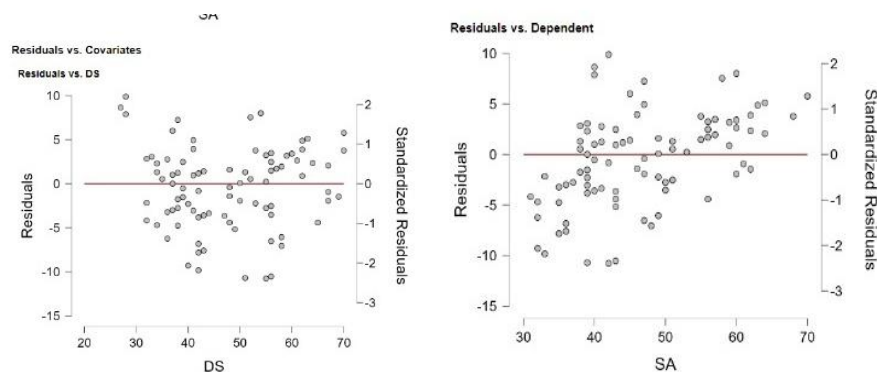


Figure 1. Scatterplot of Residuals for the Peer Social Support (DS) and Academic Stress (SA)

The results of this study indicate that the higher the level of peer social support received by students, the lower the level of academic stress they experience. These findings are consistent with the theory proposed by (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) which states that social support is an effective form of external coping strategy in alleviating stress. In this context, peer support functions not only as a source of emotional assistance but also helps individuals engage in cognitive reappraisal, that is, reinterpreting stressful situations as more manageable. With such support, students are less likely to feel alone, thereby reducing the psychological burden they experience.

Furthermore, from a psychological perspective, peer social support plays a crucial role during adolescence, as individuals at this stage tend to rely more on their peer groups than on adults. This makes peers a primary source for sharing experiences, obtaining emotional validation, and seeking solutions to academic problems. This condition reinforces the function of social support as a buffer against stress, where supportive relationships can mitigate the negative impact of academic pressure experienced by students.

This study is also supported by research conducted by which found that peer social support plays a role in reducing students' academic stress, such that higher levels of social support are associated with lower levels of stress. Furthermore, the findings of this study are consistent with those of [Lestari et al. \(2023\)](#) which demonstrated a significant negative relationship between peer social support and academic stress ($r = -0.377$; $p < 0.05$). These findings confirm that social support functions as a protective factor, not only in reducing stress levels but also in enhancing individuals' ability to cope with academic demands more adaptively.

In addition, the results of this study are consistent with those reported by [Lestari & Purnamasari \(2022\)](#) which show that social support helps individuals develop more adaptive coping strategies. In this context, students who receive social support tend to employ both problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping strategies more effectively. This is further supported by [Ifdil et al. \(2023\)](#) which indicates that the level of academic stress among students is influenced by various psychosocial factors, including support from the surrounding environment.

Moreover, the findings of this study are also supported by research conducted by [Afdal et al. \(2019\)](#) which demonstrates that psychological conditions such as anxiety and stress are associated with external factors experienced by students, making social support an important aspect in helping them manage academic pressure. The results are also in line with [\(Pangestuti et al., 2025\)](#) which show that adolescents' psychological conditions are strongly influenced by external factors, including their social relationships. This suggests that social support functions not only as a protective factor but also as a psychological resource that helps individuals maintain emotional balance when facing academic pressure. Therefore, the better the quality of students' social interactions, the greater their ability to manage stress effectively.

On the other hand, the difference in the direction of the relationship found in this study may be attributed to several factors. First, it may be related to the characteristics of the research instrument, such as the presence of negatively worded items that may not have undergone reverse scoring, thereby affecting the direction of the analysis results. Second, the context of the respondents—Grade IX students facing high academic pressure, such as final examinations—may lead to a situation where social support increases alongside rising stress levels. In this condition, students experiencing higher levels of stress tend to seek more support from their peers, resulting in a positive relationship. This phenomenon suggests the possibility of a reciprocal relationship between social support and academic stress.

Furthermore, [Khasanah et al. \(2024\)](#) indicate that social support does not always directly influence academic stress, but may interact with other variables such as positive thinking patterns. This suggests that the relationship between social support and academic stress is complex and contextual, and therefore not always linear. In other words, the effectiveness of social support in reducing stress largely depends on how individuals interpret the support they receive, as well as the accompanying psychological conditions.

Moreover, the relationship between peer social support and academic stress is influenced by various factors, both internal and external. One important internal factor is the individual's coping ability. Students with strong coping skills tend to utilize social support more effectively in managing academic pressure. Conversely, students with lower coping abilities may continue to experience stress despite receiving high levels of social support. This is supported by research indicating that social support and problem-focused coping jointly contribute to reducing students' academic stress ([Lestari & Purnamasari, 2022](#)).

In addition, another influencing factor is emotional intelligence. Individuals with higher emotional intelligence are generally better able to regulate negative emotions, enabling them to make more effective use of social support in alleviating stress. On the other hand, individuals with lower emotional intelligence are more vulnerable to experiencing stress, even within supportive social environments. Research [Nugroho et al \(2019\)](#) shows that social support and emotional intelligence together serve as important predictors in reducing academic stress.

On the other hand, external factors such as high academic demands can also influence the relationship between social support and academic stress. Under conditions of intense academic pressure, such as numerous assignments, exams, and achievement demands, students can still experience stress even when they have social support. This suggests that social support does not always completely eliminate stress, but rather plays a role in mitigating its negative impacts. Research by [Febrian & Wijayanti \(2025\)](#) shows that academic stress is influenced by various academic demands and the learning environment, so social support functions as a protective factor (buffer) against these pressures.

Furthermore, the quality of social support is also an important factor. Not all forms of social support have the same impact on academic stress. Emotional support, such as empathy and caring, tends to be more effective in reducing stress than informational or instrumental support. Research [Aziz et al. \(2023\)](#) shows that social support from peers can act as a protective factor, helping individuals feel more valued, cared for, and have greater self-confidence, thereby reducing academic stress levels.

The implications of this study's findings indicate that peer social support plays a strategic role in helping students manage academic stress. Therefore, schools need to create a supportive learning environment by encouraging positive interactions between students. Programs such as peer counseling, group work, and collaborative activities can serve as a means to strengthen social support within the school environment. Furthermore, teachers and counselors need to provide guidance in developing students' coping skills and emotional intelligence, so that they do not rely solely on social support but also develop internal resilience to deal with academic pressure.

Furthermore, parents also play a crucial role in supporting students' psychological well-being by providing attention, motivation, and creating a comfortable learning environment at home. With synergy between the school environment, peers, and family, it is hoped that students will be able to manage academic stress more effectively.

Although this study shows significant results, there are several limitations that should be considered. First, this study only used one independent variable, peer social support, so it cannot fully explain other factors that can influence students' academic stress, such as emotional intelligence, academic burden, and family support. Second, this study used a quantitative approach using a questionnaire instrument, so the data obtained are highly dependent on respondents' subjective perceptions, potentially introducing bias. Third, possible weaknesses in the research instrument, such as negative items that were not reverse scored, could influence the direction of the analysis. Fourth, the limited sample size of ninth-grade students in one particular school limits the generalizability of this study's results to a broader population. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design of the study is also a limitation because it cannot fully explain causal relationships or changes in students' academic stress over time. Therefore, the results of this study should be interpreted cautiously, taking into account these limitations.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that peer social support is an important factor in reducing students' academic stress levels. However, this relationship is not simple; it is influenced by various interacting internal and external factors. Therefore, a comprehensive and holistic approach is essential in addressing academic stress, focusing not only on increasing social support but also on strengthening individuals' capacity to manage the pressures they face.

Conclusions

The results of this study indicate that peer social support has a strong influence on students' academic stress, with the greater the support received, the lower the stress levels experienced. This finding confirms that positive social interactions among peers play a crucial role in helping students cope with academic stress. This research contributes to enriching the study of educational psychology, particularly regarding the role of social support as a protective factor

in reducing academic stress. Furthermore, this study strengthens coping theory, which positions social support as an effective external resource in helping individuals manage psychological distress. Practically, these findings imply the importance of strengthening a supportive social environment in schools through programs such as peer counseling, peer mentoring, and collaborative activities. Furthermore, developing students' coping skills and emotional intelligence is also crucial for optimal utilization of social support in reducing academic stress. However, this study has limitations because it focuses on only one predictor variable, thus not being able to comprehensively describe other factors influencing academic stress. Furthermore, the limited characteristics of the respondents, limited to one educational level, also limits the generalizability of the study results. Therefore, further research is recommended to develop a more comprehensive model incorporating other variables, such as emotional intelligence, mindset, and family support. Furthermore, a more diverse methodological approach and an expanded research population are needed to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of academic stress in students.

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