

Relationship of Peer Support and Learning Motivation among Nursing Students in Aceh, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE: The study aims to investigate the relationship between peer support and learning motivation among nursing students at Universitas Syiah Kuala (USK).

METHODOLOGY: This research study employs a descriptive correlational design with a cross-sectional approach. The sample comprised active students enrolled in the Bachelor of Nursing program, while students from the nursing profession program were excluded. Based on the Isaac and Michael formula, a proportional stratified random sampling technique was utilized, including 226 respondents. Data were gathered using the Peer Support Questionnaire (PSQ) and the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS)-Short. This data collection targeted students from the Faculty of Nursing at USK, Indonesia, in November 2023. The Spearman Rank statistical method was applied for data analysis.

RESULTS: The findings indicated that peer support among students was rated as high (62.8%) while learning motivation was similarly assessed as high (54.4%). The statistical analysis revealed a significant correlation between peer support and learning motivation among nursing students at USK, with a p-value of 0.003.

CONCLUSION: The findings reveal a substantial correlation between peer support and students' learning motivation at the Faculty of Nursing, USK. This research is anticipated to provide valuable insights for educational institutions in formulating policies and implementing educational practices to enhance peer support and student motivation, such as forming study groups or peer-to-peer mentoring initiatives. Furthermore, the study may be a reference for future research endeavors that apply nursing theories to reinforce both variables.

KEYWORDS: Peer Group, Social Support, Learning, Motivation, Nursing Students

INTRODUCTION

The significance of motivation in educational contexts, particularly within schools and academic institutions, cannot be overstated. Learning motivation is intricately linked to enhancing academic performance, as reflected in the Grade Point Average (GPA), a benchmark for students' academic success in higher education¹. Students must be imbued with robust learning motivation to spur their engagement in studies to achieve optimal educational outcomes. This correlation underscores the inseparable and balanced relationship between learning motivation and academic achievement².

Nursing students on a trajectory to become professional nurses exemplify the necessity of accountability and responsibility in their future roles. This accountability is paramount in professional nursing practice and must be instilled in nursing students during their educational journey. Becoming a competent nurse involves navigating various academic challenges, including mastering theoretical concepts, conducting clinical practice, completing examinations, and engaging in fieldwork³. These demands can elicit stress among students, as

documented by Richard et al., who found that students experience heightened psychological stress compared to their non-student peers⁴. Additional research has indicated that the educational requirements further compound this stress as students strive to balance lecture attendance, academic assignments, clinical practicums, examinations, and the pursuit of high grades⁵.

Preliminary observations indicated that students typically begin intensive study sessions the day before examinations, often jotting down critical points for retention or engaging in group study sessions to reinforce learning material. However, many students report experiencing stress and monotony due to these academic pressures. Social support, particularly from peers, is a viable strategy to mitigate this stress.

Numerous studies have examined the dynamics of peer support among nursing students, focusing on aspects such as mental health, anxiety, and academic motivation. While many of these investigations primarily seek to elucidate the broad relationship between peer support and encouragement, this research endeavors to pinpoint specific elements of peer support that may significantly influence nursing students' learning motivation.

A previous study elucidated a positive correlation between social support and learning motivation among nursing students, indicating that those who receive constructive social support exhibit higher

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motivation levels than those who encounter negative social interactions⁶. Moreover, recent findings suggest that intrinsic motivation is influential in fostering students' resilience. This trait is further bolstered by peer support, facilitating sharing of experiences and problem-solving³.

The self-determination theory (SDT), formulated by Deci and Ryan in 1985, profoundly shapes the evaluation of learning motivation within social support. This theory emphasizes the importance of self-development and self-regulatory behaviors within social contexts⁷. SDT highlights the necessity of addressing individuals' intrinsic psychological needs, which play a critical role in determining the aspects of their environment that can foster independent motivation, enhance psychological and physiological well-being, and promote effective functioning⁸.

Among the intrinsic psychological needs identified by SDT, social support is a significant factor for students. Social support encompasses the assistance others provide, thereby fostering an individual's sense of being cared for, valued, and appreciated². This support can manifest in material and emotional forms from family, friends, educational staff, social organizations, or online social networks. Supporting this notion, Sarason has described social support as stemming from close social relationships, including parents, siblings, teachers, peers, and community members, which contribute to an environment where individuals feel valued and loved⁹.

This study specifically focuses on peer support, which refers to the encouragement and emotional backing from friends and peers. This support is particularly critical during the formative years of 18 to 24 when peer relationships significantly influence the academic environment¹⁰. The impact of peer support on enhancing learning motivation among students cannot be overstated; peer relationships are often viewed as the primary social network. This dynamic is particularly pronounced among students who reside away from their families and who tend to establish closer bonds with their peers due to limited family interaction^{10,11}. Consequently, this research explores the relationship between peer support and learning motivation among nursing students at Universitas Syiah Kuala (USK).

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This research employs a quantitative methodology characterized by a cross-sectional design and a descriptive correlational approach. Specifically, the quantitative research method is implemented by administering a structured questionnaire that is presented online, targeting the Faculty of Nursing (FoN) student population at USK. The choice of this method facilitates the systematic collection of data that allows for the exploration of relationships between variables within the context of nursing education.

Population and Sample

This study examined 557 students enrolled in the FoN at USK. From this population, 226 respondents were selected to participate in the research. This selection was conducted using a proportional stratified random sampling technique, informed by the methodology articulated in the Isaac and Michael formula. This rigorous sampling approach ensures that the sample accurately reflects the demographic distribution of the larger population, enabling a more reliable analysis of the data collected.

Data Collection Method

In the present research, two distinct types of questionnaires were employed to gather data. The first instrument, the Peer Support Questionnaire (PSQ), was developed by Aleai and Hosseinnezhad⁴. This questionnaire comprises 22 positive statement items that utilize a Likert scale to facilitate responses. The second instrument used was the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS)-Short, translated into Indonesian and modified by Natalya⁵, consisting of 15 questions designed to assess various aspects of academic motivation. Both questionnaires were administered through a self-reporting mechanism via an online form, ensuring that participants could respond in a convenient and accessible manner.

Data Analysis

Data processing in this study was conducted according to four distinct steps: editing, coding, processing, and cleaning. Descriptive statistics were employed and subsequently analyzed utilizing the SPSS statistical software. The characteristics of the respondents included three demographic variables: Gender, Age, and GPA. For the categorization of peer support and academic motivation, a scoring system was implemented whereby a score classified as "HIGH" corresponds to values that are equal to or greater than the median (Md), denoted as $x \geq Md$ ($Md = 88$), while a score classified as "LOW" pertains to values that are less than the median, indicated as $x < Md$ ($Md = 72$). Furthermore, percentages were calculated to quantify the data distribution resulting from these categorizations.

Ethical Statement

This study received ethical approval from the Faculty of Nursing Ethics Committee at University Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, Indonesia, letter No. 111016251023. Participants were given informed consent, allowing them to complete the questionnaire or withdraw at any time if they felt uneasy. We guarantee that respondents' privacy and anonymity will be preserved.

RESULTS

Characteristics of Respondent

The findings of this study are intricately categorized into three primary sections: the characteristics of the respondents, the frequency distribution concerning peer support, and the levels of learning motivation, as well as an analysis of the relationship between peer

support and learning motivation. The characteristics of the respondents examined in this research encompass demographic variables such as gender, age, and GPA, all of which are meticulously presented in **Table I**.

Table I: Respondent characteristics (n=226)

Characteristics	f	%
Gender		
Female	207	91.6
Male	19	8.4
Age		
(Late Teenage)		
18 years	65	28.8
19 years	53	23.5
(Early Adult)		
20 years	54	23.9
21 years	45	19.9
22 years	9	4.0
GPA Value		
Cumlaude (3.51 - 4.00)	125	55.3
Very Satisfying (3.01 - 3.50)	34	15.0
No Reported	67	29.6

Table I presents the demographic breakdown of the study participants, highlighting key attributes such as gender, age, and academic performance. In the sample, a significant majority identified as female, comprising 91.6% of the participants. The age distribution indicates that 28.8% of the participants are 18. Furthermore, the academic performance of the participants is assessed using the GPA metric, with a notable 55.3% achieving a GPA classified as Cum Laude, which corresponds to a GPA range of 3.51 to 4.00.

Overview of Peer Support for Students of the FoN, USK

Table II: Peer Support for Students (n = 226)

Peer Support	f	%
High	142	62.8
Low	84	37.2

Table II shows the peer support mechanisms available to Nursing students at USK. Notably, 62.8% of students rated their peer support experiences high quality. This highlights the importance of peer collaboration in the nursing program and indicates that adequate peer support significantly enhances student outcomes.

Overview of Student Learning Motivation at the FoN, USK

Table III: Student Learning Motivation (n = 226)

Learning Motivation	f	%
High	123	54.4
Low	103	45.6

Table III shows that 54.4% of nursing students at USK report high motivation. This indicates strong

engagement and effective motivational strategies within the faculty, fostering an inspiring learning atmosphere.

The Relationship between Peer Support and Student Learning Motivation at the FoN, USK

Table IV: Relationship between Peer Support and Student Learning Motivation (n= 226)

Variables	High (%)	Low (%)	P-value
Peer Support	62.8	37.2	0.003
Learning Motivation	54.4	45.6	

Table IV shows the relationship between peer support and student learning motivation at the FoN USK. The study indicates a significant relationship, with a P-value of 0.003, suggesting that increased peer support boosts student motivation. This implies that promoting peer support can enhance student engagement and academic performance.

DISCUSSION

An analysis of **Table I** reveals that most respondents in this study were female, comprising 207 individuals (91.6%), with age distribution showing 65 respondents (28.8%) aged 18 years. Additionally, 125 respondents achieved high GPA scores, categorized as 'cum laude' (>3.50). The findings suggest that most respondents fall within the late teenage demographic, specifically in the 18-19 age range. Recent research indicates that the most decisive peer influence occurs during early and late adolescence, a critical phase when individuals must prepare for adulthood, addressing mental, physical, and material readiness¹². The research findings further confirm that a predominant number of respondents are female, consistent with previous studies suggesting that females demonstrate more excellent proficiency in material understanding, verbal fluency, and identifying specific features within subjects, alongside greater accuracy in manual tasks such as writing¹³. Conversely, males typically excel in visualizing objects in three dimensions, as well as in physical activities and problem-solving capabilities. The results also indicate that a substantial portion of nursing students possesses GPAs categorized as 'cum laude' within the range of 3.51 to 4.00. This observation aligns with extant studies that highlight the impact of high motivation, interest, and other supportive factors, such as attendance and academic performance, on achieving a cum laude GPA¹⁴.

According to **Table 2**, among the 226 nursing student respondents, 62.8% belong to the high peer support category. In parallel, 54.4% of these respondents fall within the high learning motivation category. Other research supports this, demonstrating a significant relationship between peer group support, the learning environment, and learning motivation; specifically, increased peer support and a conducive learning environment correlate positively with enhanced

learning motivation scores¹⁵.

Peer support is characterized by spontaneous emotional or physical assistance exchanged among peers. People who have faced challenging situations will share helpful coping strategies with others dealing with similar challenges for the first time. Furthermore, those who have overcome adversity usually offer empathy and support to those experiencing related difficulties¹⁶.

The categorization of peer support encompasses five functional types: emotional, instrumental, informational, friendship support, and validation. Emotional support encompasses empathy, concern, trust, and attentiveness towards individuals¹⁷. Instrumental support refers to practical assistance provided directly through behavioral actions or material resources. Information support includes guidance, advice, or suggestions for problem-solving⁶. Friendship support embodies the supportive aspects of friendship, while validation represents feedback that informs individuals about suitable and appropriate behaviors^{4,7}.

As per the instrumental support indicators, most respondents affirmed that their peers frequently offer resources and tools to enhance their comprehension of learning materials, such as collaborative assignment completion, sharing laptops, or providing access to books. This finding aligns with existing literature in which students support their peers through joint assignments, lending equipment, and assisting in completing friends' assignments¹⁸.

Regarding validation support indicators, several respondents acknowledged the value of receiving feedback from friends to address problems and enhance the quality of their work, which fosters critical thinking abilities⁴. This observation is consistent with research indicating that feedback is instrumental in developing essential thinking skills, necessitating active student engagement in the conceptualization, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and communication of information within the educational framework⁸.

Moreover, regarding informational support, peer guidance significantly contributes to students' active lecture participation and expands their knowledge base. Research by Faqih emphasizes that when academic assistance is required, students preferentially seek peer help. They often remind each other of assignment deadlines, collaborate on assignments, or work together to fulfil academic tasks¹⁸.

Table 3 indicates that 54.4% of the 226 nursing student respondents fall within the high learning motivation category. This finding is corroborated by previous research, which suggests that most nursing students demonstrate high levels of learning motivation, underscoring a significant positive correlation between peer social support and students' learning motivation. Such findings carry important implications for nursing students^{19,20}.

Learning motivation is a critical driving force that transforms an individual's energy into purposeful activities to achieve specific objectives⁹. Six factors have been identified as influential in shaping learning motivation throughout the educational process: ideals and aspirations, learners' abilities, conditions of the learners themselves, environmental factors affecting the learners, dynamic learning elements, and the efforts of educators, along with peer influence¹⁵.

The statistical analysis in Table 4, conducted to explore the relationship between peer support and learning motivation among nursing students at the FoN, USK, employed Spearman's rank correlation test. The test yielded a significance value (Sig.) of 0.003, less than the threshold of 0.05, thus indicating a significant relationship between peer support and learning motivation for nursing students at this institution. Furthermore, research conducted by Ginting et al. supports these findings, asserting a positive relationship between peer support and student learning motivation; specifically, it posits that enhanced peer support correlates with elevated levels of student learning motivation¹⁰.

The outcomes of this study resonate with the principles of SDT, as articulated by Deci and Ryan¹¹. This theory illustrates how peer support motivates high academic performance, aligning with its foundational aspects. Engaging with peers fosters social support, camaraderie, and a conducive environment, encouraging students to aspire to higher academic success^{7,8}.

Finally, in nursing education, this study's findings offer valuable insights for educational institutions, highlighting the need to formulate policies and practices to enhance peer support and student learning motivation. Recommendations include establishing study groups, student mentoring programs, and discussion sessions to facilitate reciprocal support among students in their academic pursuits. Future research endeavors may leverage this study as a foundational reference for further investigation into the dynamics of peer support and learning motivation within nursing student populations.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate a significant correlation between peer support and learning motivation among students of the FoN at USK, with a p-value of 0.003 ($p < 0.05$). This finding suggests that as the level of peer support increases, so does the motivation for learning among students. Given that most respondents are adolescents, it is evident that social support plays a critical role in shaping attitudes and behaviors, including learning motivation. Regarding policy implications, it is recommended that educational institutions enhance the learning environment by fostering collaboration within curricular and extracurricular activities among students. Such initiatives would give students more opportunities for interaction and collective growth toward shared goals.

Moreover, educators should adopt strategies that promote cooperation rather than competition in academic achievement. This study could be a foundation for more advanced investigations incorporating additional variables and interventions for future research. However, a limitation of this research is the need for measurements of potential contributing factors to both peer support and learning motivation, which may significantly influence the results.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Ridwan A: Significant role in formulating the study and developing the principal hypothesis to be tested, revised the draft articles in response to feedback from co-authors and reviewers.

Zulhijjah NS: Designing the research, collecting data, interpreting the study results, and assessing the implications of the research findings.

Yanti SV: Contributed to the manuscript's composition and the subsequent preparation of the original draft.

All authors share responsibility for the final editorial review to ensure that the manuscripts adhere to the journal's submission guidelines.

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