Sagita Academia Journal
Vol 04, No 03, 2026 | Page (74-78)
Doi: https://doi.org/10.61579/sagita.v4i3.926

OPEN ACCESS

Peer Group Dynamics and Learning Climate of Madrasah Aliyah Students at Darul Hikmah Pesantren

Rosi Indah Sari[1*], Rara Nadzua Zahra[1], Risa Yuzima[1], Dhea Imanda Hanum[1], Selfia Yolanda[1], Sopar Sinambela[1]

[1]Sociology Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Teuku Umar, Aceh, Indonesia

Email Corresponding : indahsari72939@gmail.com

Abstract

This study describes the dynamics of peer groups among Grade X students of Madrasah Aliyah (MA), their learning climate, the influence of peer group dynamics on the learning climate, and the factors shaping this relationship at Darul Hikmah Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School, Meureubo, West Aceh. A descriptive qualitative approach was used, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results show that peer group dynamics are fairly active, marked by high solidarity and social interaction, and that the learning climate is fairly good and conducive. Peer groups influence the learning climate positively, through greater motivation, shared enthusiasm for study, and a comfortable atmosphere, and negatively, through poor discipline, disrupted concentration, and imitation of peers' unhelpful habits. The relevant factors are the level of interaction, the dormitory environment, learning motivation, the role of teachers and caregivers, and group solidarity. Positive peer relationships should therefore be fostered to sustain a conducive learning climate in the pesantren.

Article History

Received : June 27, 2026
Revised : October 23, 2026
Accepted : October 23, 2026

Keywords:

peer groups, learning climate, Madrasah Aliyah students, Islamic boarding school

How to Cite:

Sari, I., Zahra, R. N., Yuzima, R., Hanum, D. I., Yolanda, S., & Sinambela, S. Peer Group Dynamics and Learning Climate of Madrasah Aliyah Students at Darul Hikmah Pesantren. *Sagita Academia Journal*, *4*(3), 74–78. https://doi.org/10.61579/sagita.v4i3.926.

INTRODUCTION

Education is an important aspect of shaping human beings of higher quality. The success of education is influenced not only by the learning process led by teachers but also by the social environment that surrounds students. One social environment with a major influence on adolescent development is the peer group. During adolescence, individuals tend to spend more time with their peers than with their families. Peer groups become a setting in which adolescents interact, share experiences, form their identities, and obtain social and emotional support. In educational settings, the presence of peer groups can have both positive and negative effects on students' behavior and study habits.

Learning climate refers to the conditions or atmosphere that students feel while the learning process is taking place. A good learning climate is characterized by comfortable and harmonious social relationships, discipline, and an environment that supports learning activities. Conversely, a learning climate that is not conducive can hinder the learning process and reduce students' motivation to learn. In an Islamic boarding school (pesantren), interaction among students is more intensive because they not only study together in class but also live in the same dormitory environment. This condition makes the influence of peer groups stronger than in general schools. Grade X students of Madrasah Aliyah (MA), who are still adjusting to a new environment, are particularly susceptible to the influence of their peer groups.

Darul Hikmah Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School in Meureubo, West Aceh, is an educational institution that integrates general education and Islamic religious education. The intensive social interaction in the pesantren environment has the potential to affect students'

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learning atmosphere. It is therefore important to examine how peer group dynamics influence the learning climate of Grade X MA students. Based on this background, this study aims to: (1) describe the dynamics of peer groups among Grade X MA students; (2) describe the condition of the students' learning climate; (3) examine the influence of peer group dynamics on the learning climate; and (4) identify the factors that shape the relationship between peer groups and the learning climate at Darul Hikmah Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School, Meureubo, West Aceh.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design and Location

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. The qualitative approach was chosen because it provides an in-depth understanding of the social phenomena that occur in the lives of Grade X MA students, particularly peer group dynamics and the learning climate in the pesantren environment. The research was conducted at Darul Hikmah Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School in Meureubo, West Aceh, from 12 to 16 May 2026. The research subjects were Grade X MA students who actively took part in learning activities and lived in the pesantren environment.

Data Collection

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were made directly to examine the patterns of interaction among Grade X MA students, both during classroom learning and in daily life in the dormitory. Interviews were conducted with several students as informants to obtain deeper information about their experiences of interacting with peers and the influence of this interaction on their learning process and enthusiasm. Documentation was used as supporting data in the form of photographs of activities, field notes, and other documents relevant to the research focus.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out in stages through data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation were analyzed systematically to identify patterns related to peer group dynamics and their influence on students' learning climate at Darul Hikmah Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School, Meureubo, West Aceh.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Peer Group Dynamics among Grade X Students

The research conducted at Darul Hikmah Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School found that the MA functions not only as a formal educational institution but also as a social environment that plays a major role in shaping patterns of interaction, solidarity, and friendship among Grade X students. This condition is shaped by the pesantren education system, which places students in a single shared living environment, so that social interaction takes place almost throughout the day.

The observations show that the social life of students at the pesantren is active and dynamic. All students take part in various activities together, from classroom learning, congregational prayers, and religious activities to evening study sessions, cleaning duties, sports, and extracurricular activities. Because these activities are carried out collectively, the frequency of interaction among students is very high. The researchers observed that students rarely did anything individually, since almost all pesantren activities are designed to be carried out together. This situation gives students ample opportunity to get to know one another, exchange experiences, cooperate, and build close social relationships.

During lessons, the researchers found that students were accustomed to discussing when teachers assigned group tasks. Students with a better understanding of the material were seen helping classmates who had not yet grasped it. This cooperation occurred not only when teachers gave instructions but also spontaneously, out of the students' own awareness. After lessons ended,

the interaction continued in the dormitory. Some students were seen studying together at night, reviewing lessons, and discussing assignments that were due. This phenomenon shows that the social relationships formed in the MA do not stop at academic ties but develop into closer friendships, supported by communal life in the pesantren environment.

The Role of Teachers

Besides relationships among students, the researchers also observed the active role of teachers in shaping the dynamics of social relationships in the MA environment. Teachers do not merely deliver lessons; they also act as mentors who guide students in building healthy social relationships. On many occasions, teachers reminded students not to treat friends differently on the basis of their region of origin, academic ability, or family economic condition. Teachers also instilled the importance of mutual respect, cooperation, and helping friends who are having difficulties. Through these habits, a school culture that encourages positive social relationships has been created. Peer group dynamics are therefore shaped not only by personal closeness among students but also by the values that the MA builds.

Interview Findings

An interview was conducted with one Grade X student, Oja Fitria. The informant explained that life in the MA offers many opportunities for students to build friendships. She said that when they first entered the pesantren, most students did not know one another because they came from different regions. After taking part in various activities together, however, the relationships among students became closer. The informant stated, "At first we didn't know everyone, but because we see each other every day in class, live in the dormitory, eat together, and study together, we all ended up close. Now, if a friend is struggling, they usually get helped right away." This statement shows that the high intensity of interaction is the main factor in the formation of peer groups in the MA environment.

According to the informant, almost all activities are carried out together, so communication among students is continuous. She said, "We're almost never alone. From morning until night, we do everything together: group study, class cleaning duty, religious study sessions, sports, even pesantren events. So we gradually got closer." These interview results show that the activities designed by the MA serve an important social function, namely bringing students together in various situations so that friendships develop naturally. The more often students take part in shared activities, the stronger the solidarity that forms among them.

The interview also shows that peer group dynamics provide a positive social experience for students. The informant explained that the peer group is a place to exchange opinions, discuss, and give motivation when facing learning difficulties. She said, "When my friends are diligent about studying, I usually get motivated too. Before exams we often study together until late at night. If someone doesn't understand a lesson, a friend usually explains it." This statement shows that the peer groups formed in the MA environment have become a source of social support for students. This support not only helps students understand the lesson material but also increases their self-confidence and strengthens the emotional bonds among them.

The informant also admitted that misunderstandings occasionally occur among friends, especially during jokes or when completing group assignments. However, such conflicts can generally be resolved through communication and mutual apologies. She said, "Sometimes there are misunderstandings, but they usually don't last long. Afterwards we talk again, apologize, and are friends again." This finding shows that conflict is an inseparable part of the dynamics of any social group. Nevertheless, the culture of deliberation (*musyawarah*) and mutual respect practiced in the MA serves as a conflict-resolution mechanism, so that social relationships remain well maintained.

Discussion

The findings above can be analyzed using the theory of Symbolic Interactionism proposed by George Herbert Mead and developed by Herbert Blumer. According to this theory, individual

behavior is formed through a continuous process of social interaction. Individuals give meaning to the actions of others, and that meaning then becomes the basis for their own actions. In this study, students interpret the various activities they do together as expressions of togetherness, cooperation, and solidarity. These meanings are then expressed in behavior such as helping one another, showing respect, and maintaining good relations with friends. Thus, the peer group dynamics that develop in the MA are the result of an intensive process of social interaction in the pesantren environment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research on the dynamics of peer groups and the learning climate of Grade X students at Darul Hikmah Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School, Meureubo, West Aceh, it can be concluded that peer group dynamics play a significant role in shaping students' learning climate in the pesantren environment. The high intensity of interaction through both academic and non-academic activities fosters close social relationships, strong solidarity, and a culture of mutual help among students. These conditions create a conducive learning atmosphere, increase learning motivation, strengthen cooperation in the learning process, and foster a shared sense of responsibility for learning success. At the same time, the study shows that peer group dynamics do not always have positive effects: in certain conditions, peer groups can give rise to behavior that does not support learning, such as declining discipline, disrupted concentration, and a tendency to follow the unproductive behavior of friends. These negative influences can, however, be minimized through guidance from teachers and pesantren caregivers and through the values of togetherness, deliberation, mutual respect, and responsibility that characterize the pesantren culture. The relationship between peer group dynamics and learning climate is also shaped by several factors, namely the intensity of interaction among students, a dormitory environment that allows continuous communication, learning motivation, the role of teachers and caregivers as mentors, and high group solidarity; these factors are interrelated in forming a learning environment that supports students' academic and social development. The findings also reinforce the perspective of Symbolic Interactionism, in which meaning, behavior, and social relationships are formed through continuous interaction: students interpret shared activities as togetherness, cooperation, and solidarity, which produces behavior of mutual support, respect, and help in learning activities. Accordingly, the more positive the peer relationships that form, the more conducive the learning climate created in the pesantren. Overall, this study confirms that positive peer group dynamics need to be continuously developed as a strategy for creating a conducive learning climate at Darul Hikmah Islamiyah Islamic Boarding School. The school and the pesantren are therefore encouraged to keep promoting collaborative activities, strengthen character development, and reinforce the role of teachers and caregivers in guiding students' social interaction, so that peer groups become a source of support that sustainably improves the quality of learning, social development, and character formation of students.

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