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The Role of Friendship in Enhancing the Learning Motivation of Grade IX Students at UPTD State Junior High School 16 Kupang

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Abstract: *This study aims to describe the role of friendship in improving the learning enthusiasm of Grade IX students at UPTD SMP Negeri 16 Kupang. This research employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. The informants consisted of 11 participants, including six students, four guidance and counseling teachers, and one homeroom teacher. Data were collected through interviews using question guides tailored to each group of informants. The findings indicate that friendship plays a role in supporting students' learning enthusiasm through motivation, sharing learning materials and notes, discussions, collaborative assignments, and assistance for peers who experience difficulties in understanding lessons. Positive friendships also help students feel accepted, become more confident, and participate more actively in learning activities. Nevertheless, friendship may have negative effects when it involves excessive joking, classroom distractions, task procrastination, conflicts, or social exclusion. Therefore, friendships characterized by mutual respect, care, and positive support can serve as one of the factors that contribute to students' learning enthusiasm.*

Keywords: *friendship; learning enthusiasm; students; peer support*

Abstrak: *Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan peran pertemanan dalam meningkatkan semangat belajar siswa kelas IX di UPTD SMP Negeri 16 Kupang. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian deskriptif. Informan penelitian berjumlah 11 orang, terdiri atas 6 siswa, 4 guru bimbingan dan konseling, serta 1 wali kelas. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara dengan pedoman pertanyaan yang disesuaikan untuk setiap kelompok informan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pertemanan memiliki peran dalam mendukung semangat belajar siswa melalui pemberian motivasi, berbagi informasi dan catatan pelajaran, berdiskusi, mengerjakan tugas bersama, serta membantu teman yang mengalami kesulitan memahami materi. Hubungan pertemanan yang positif juga membuat siswa merasa diterima, lebih percaya diri, dan berani berpartisipasi dalam kegiatan pembelajaran. Meskipun demikian, pertemanan dapat memberikan pengaruh kurang baik apabila diwarnai kebiasaan bercanda secara berlebihan, mengganggu konsentrasi, menunda tugas, konflik, atau pengucilan. Dengan demikian, pertemanan yang dilandasi sikap saling menghargai, kepedulian, dan dukungan positif dapat menjadi salah satu faktor yang membantu membangun semangat belajar siswa.*

Kata kunci: *pertemanan; semangat belajar; siswa; dukungan teman sebaya*

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Introduction

Education is a process that helps students develop the abilities, knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for life. The success of the educational process is determined not only by teachers' ability to deliver learning materials but also by students' involvement in learning activities. One of the factors that can support such involvement is learning motivation. Students with strong learning motivation tend to demonstrate interest in their lessons, make efforts to understand the material, participate in classroom activities, and complete assigned tasks.

Students' learning motivation can be influenced by various factors, both internal and external. The social environment at school is one aspect that deserves attention because students spend a considerable amount of time interacting with their peers. Friendships formed within the school environment can create an atmosphere that either supports or hinders learning activities. Friends can serve as a source of encouragement, provide opportunities for exchanging ideas, and offer assistance when students encounter difficulties in understanding lessons.

Friendship in educational settings is not merely associated with social closeness but can also contribute to students' academic experiences. Alotaibi et al. (2023) explained that friendships in academic settings can provide benefits through emotional support, cooperation, knowledge exchange, and motivation. Positive interactions among friends can also help students cope with academic pressure. Conversely, unsupportive social relationships may disrupt concentration and learning activities.

Peer support is also associated with students' motivation to participate in learning activities. Kaynak et al. (2023) found that school motivation serves as one of the mechanisms linking peer support to students' academic achievement. This finding indicates that having supportive friends can help foster students' willingness to participate in school activities. Similarly, Shao et al. (2024) explained that peer relationships are associated with academic achievement through learning motivation and engagement. Therefore, the quality of friendships deserves attention as one of the factors related to students' learning experiences.

The influence of friendship on learning activities is not always positive. Unsupportive friendship groups may lead students to spend more time joking around, neglecting assignments, or losing concentration during lessons. Steenberghs et al. (2024) demonstrated that peers can influence both academic engagement and disengagement during early adolescence. This suggests that interactions with friends can shape students' habits in participating in learning activities, either through positive behavioral examples or through behaviors that are less supportive.

Based on preliminary observations conducted during the MBKM program at UPTD State Junior High School 16 Kupang, most students appeared to interact well with their friends. However, some students were still relatively quiet and tended to spend time alone. This condition deserves attention because friendships may be related to students' comfort in social interactions, confidence in expressing their opinions, and involvement in learning activities. Students who receive acceptance and support from their friends are expected to feel more comfortable participating in classroom learning.

In response to this situation, this study was designed to examine how friendship plays a role in supporting the learning motivation of Grade IX students. It considers not only the forms of positive support provided by friends but also identifies friendship dynamics that may hinder learning activities. Accordingly, this study aims to describe the role of friendship in enhancing the learning motivation of Grade IX students at UPTD State Junior High School 16 Kupang based on the experiences and perspectives of students, guidance and counseling teachers, and homeroom teachers.

Method

Research Design and Setting

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. This approach was used to obtain an overview of the role of friendship in enhancing students' learning motivation based on the experiences, perspectives, and accounts of the informants. The study was conducted at UPTD State Junior High School 16 Kupang from October to November 2026.

Participants, Sample, or Data Sources

The study involved 11 informants, consisting of six Grade IX students, four guidance and counseling teachers, and one homeroom teacher. The students served as the primary informants to provide information about their experiences in establishing friendships and participating in learning activities. The guidance and counseling teachers provided information regarding students' social relationships, the influence of friendship on learning activities, and the forms of support provided when conflicts or problems arose among friends. Meanwhile, the homeroom teacher provided information about student interactions and the influence of friendship groups on students' involvement in classroom learning.

Instruments and Measures

Data were collected through interviews using an interview guide consisting of questions tailored to each group of informants. The student

interviews covered eight questions concerning friendship relationships, support in learning activities, experiences of receiving motivation from friends, collaborative learning activities, the influence of friendship on learning motivation, challenges arising in friendships, assistance when experiencing difficulties in understanding learning materials, and the characteristics of friendships that support learning.

The interviews with guidance and counseling teachers and the homeroom teacher also consisted of eight questions, adjusted to their respective roles and experiences. These questions focused on student relationships, the influence of peer interactions on learning activities, problems that may arise within friendship groups, and efforts to foster supportive social relationships in the school environment.

Procedure and Research Ethics

Data collection was carried out through interviews with the 11 informants at UPTD State Junior High School 16 Kupang. The interviews were conducted using separate sets of questions adapted to the roles and experiences of students, guidance and counseling teachers, and the homeroom teacher. Information was gathered regarding students' friendship experiences, the forms of support provided by peers, the positive and negative influences of friendship on learning activities, and the efforts made by school personnel to address interpersonal difficulties.

The information obtained from the informants was subsequently reviewed and organized according to the main topics of the study. The identities of the informants were treated confidentially, and the information provided was used for research purposes.

Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed descriptively by examining the information provided by each group of informants. The responses were grouped according to the main topics related to the forms of friendship support, the positive and negative influences of friendship, and efforts to establish social relationships that support learning activities. Information from students, guidance and counseling teachers, and the homeroom teacher was examined to identify similarities and differences in their accounts. The findings were then presented descriptively to provide an understanding of the role of friendship in enhancing the learning motivation of Grade IX students.

Results and Discussion

Results

Based on interviews with six Grade IX students, four guidance and counseling teachers, and one homeroom teacher, the findings indicate that friendship is related to students' learning motivation. Information provided by the informants reveals that peers can offer support in learning activities, foster self-confidence, and help students overcome academic difficulties. However, friendships may also create obstacles when they are not accompanied by self-control and mutual respect.

Forms of Friendship Support in Learning Activities

The student interviews revealed that peer support in learning activities takes various simple forms. Students reported that their friends often remind them about assignments, share notes, provide information about missed lessons, and invite them to study together. When dealing with difficult learning materials, they also try to explain the content using simpler language or provide examples of questions.

Several students expressed that studying together makes learning activities more enjoyable. They can exchange opinions, compare answers, divide tasks, and help one another understand the material. Such support makes students feel that they do not have to face learning difficulties alone. Furthermore, friends with positive study habits can encourage others to prepare more diligently and pay closer attention to teachers' explanations.

The accounts provided by the guidance and counseling teachers support these findings. They explained that students in supportive friendship environments tend to be more willing to ask questions, participate in discussions, and engage in classroom activities. Peer support can also help students who were previously less confident become more open to expressing their opinions. According to the homeroom teacher, assistance among students can be observed through sharing notes, explaining assignment instructions, discussing learning materials, and working collaboratively in groups.

The Influence of Friendship on Students' Learning Motivation and Self-Confidence

The interviews revealed that positive friendships can make students feel more comfortable participating in learning activities. Students feel more motivated when they have friends with whom they can discuss lessons, remind one another about responsibilities, and provide encouragement when difficulties arise. Some students also stated that support from friends makes them more willing to attempt solving questions and less likely to give up when they achieve unsatisfactory results.

These experiences were also evident when students prepared for examinations. Friends who invite others to study together, discuss learning materials, and practice answering questions can help improve students' preparedness and confidence. In addition, students who have opportunities to express

their opinions without fear of being mocked tend to feel more confident when participating in classroom activities.

The guidance and counseling teachers explained that some students who were initially less active began to ask questions and participate in discussions after receiving support from more confident peers. The homeroom teacher also reported that students who previously rarely participated in discussions began to show greater involvement after their group members invited them to communicate and provided opportunities for them to express their opinions.

Negative Influences of Friendship on Learning Activities

In addition to its positive influences, the interviews also revealed friendship-related situations that may hinder learning motivation. Some students admitted that they had lost concentration because they became too absorbed in joking or chatting while the teacher was explaining the lesson. Other students had postponed completing assignments because they accepted their friends' invitations to play. These experiences indicate that close friendships do not always have a supportive effect on learning activities.

The guidance and counseling teachers reported that friendship-related problems that may interfere with learning include teasing, disagreements, social exclusion, disturbing classmates during lessons, and encouraging others to neglect assignments. Such situations can make students feel uncomfortable, lose concentration, or become reluctant to participate in classroom activities. The teachers also explained that some students belong to relatively close-knit friendship groups, whereas others tend to be quieter and require assistance in adjusting socially.

The homeroom teacher stated that friendship groups may hinder learning when their members become overly occupied with joking or form exclusive circles. Differences of opinion among students can also sometimes disrupt cooperation when completing group assignments. Therefore, students need to understand the boundaries between study time and socializing to ensure that friendships do not interfere with their academic responsibilities.

Efforts to Foster Friendships That Support Learning Motivation

Based on the interview findings, guidance and counseling teachers provide assistance to students experiencing friendship-related problems through an individual approach. They give students opportunities to talk about the difficulties they face, listen to their accounts, and help them consider possible solutions. When necessary, the guidance and counseling teachers coordinate with the homeroom teacher or other relevant school personnel while maintaining student confidentiality.

The guidance and counseling teachers also explained that the outcomes of counseling and assistance vary among students. Some students become more open, more willing to express their feelings, and able to resume communication with their friends. However, other students require more time and continued support. Therefore, addressing friendship-related problems needs to be adjusted to each student's individual circumstances.

Meanwhile, the homeroom teacher seeks to foster positive friendships by organizing rotating study groups so that students can interact with different classmates. The teacher also encourages students to respect one another's opinions, appreciate their peers, avoid mocking others' mistakes, and resolve disagreements through constructive communication. These efforts are intended to help all students feel accepted and have opportunities to participate in learning activities.

Overall, the interview findings indicate that friendship can support learning motivation through encouragement, cooperation, academic assistance, and social acceptance. However, these benefits may diminish when friendships involve behaviors that disrupt learning activities. Therefore, positive friendships need to be fostered through mutual respect, care, and shared responsibility.

Discussion

The findings indicate that friendship plays a role in supporting students' learning motivation through encouragement, academic assistance, cooperation, and emotional support. The interview findings reveal that students receive encouragement to learn when their friends invite them to participate in discussions, remind them about assignments, share notes, and help explain materials they do not yet understand. These forms of support make learning activities feel easier and more enjoyable because students can overcome difficulties together with their peers.

These findings are consistent with the study by Alotaibi et al. (2023), which explains that friendships in academic settings can provide benefits in the form of emotional support, knowledge exchange, cooperation, and motivation. In this study, these benefits were reflected in students' experiences of receiving assistance when friends explained learning materials, invited them to study together, and offered encouragement when they encountered difficulties. Thus, friendships not only fulfill students' social needs but can also provide support in carrying out their academic responsibilities.

Peer support was also evident in students' increased willingness to ask questions and express their opinions. Some students stated that they felt more confident when their friends did not mock their mistakes and were willing to help explain the learning materials. Guidance and counseling teachers and the homeroom teacher also observed that students who received support from their peers tended to become more open and gradually participate in classroom discussions. This condition indicates that acceptance within friendship groups can create an atmosphere in which students feel safe to participate.

These findings are consistent with the study by Kaynak et al. (2023), which demonstrated that school motivation mediates the relationship between peer support and academic achievement. Support received from friendship environments may be associated with students' willingness to participate in school activities. In the context of this study, such support was evident through invitations to study together, encouragement, and friends' willingness to provide assistance when students experienced difficulties. This suggests that supportive friendships can serve as one of the factors that help maintain students' motivation in learning activities.

Furthermore, students' collaborative learning activities demonstrated cooperation in understanding learning materials and completing assignments. Students exchanged opinions, compared answers, divided tasks, and explained materials using language that was easier to understand. These activities provided opportunities for students to receive explanations from their peers' perspectives. Shao et al. (2024) explained that peer relationships are associated with academic achievement through learning motivation and engagement. The findings of this study illustrate such engagement through students' participation in discussions, group work, and mutual assistance.

Nevertheless, the findings also indicate that friendship does not always have a supportive influence on learning. Some students admitted that joking and chatting while the teacher was explaining the lesson could disrupt their concentration. In addition, invitations to play sometimes caused students to postpone completing their assignments. Guidance and counseling teachers and the homeroom teacher also reported that conflicts, teasing, social exclusion, and exclusive friendship groups could reduce students' comfort when participating in learning activities.

These findings are consistent with Steenberghs et al. (2024), who explained that peers can influence both students' engagement and disengagement in academic activities. Such influences may emerge through the habits and behaviors developed within friendship groups. In this study, chatting during lessons, postponing assignments, and disturbing classmates were examples of interactions that could hinder learning activities. Therefore, the influence of friendship depends on the quality of relationships and the habits developed among students.

The friendship-related problems experienced by students also highlight the importance of guidance and counseling teachers and homeroom teachers in creating a supportive social environment. Based on the interview findings, guidance and counseling teachers provide individual assistance, listen to students' concerns, help them identify solutions, and coordinate with the homeroom teacher when necessary. The homeroom teacher also seeks to encourage more open interactions through rotating study groups and the development of mutual respect. These efforts can help students feel accepted and reduce the possibility of social exclusion and conflicts that interfere with learning activities.

Overall, the findings indicate that friendship can serve as a source of social and academic support for students. Positive relationships help students gain motivation, develop confidence in participating, and overcome learning difficulties through cooperation. Conversely, unhealthy relationships can disrupt concentration and reduce students' involvement in learning activities. Therefore, friendships that support learning motivation need to be fostered through care, mutual respect, effective communication, and responsibility in carrying out academic activities.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that friendship plays a role in supporting the learning motivation of Grade IX students at UPTD State Junior High School 16 Kupang. This role is reflected in providing encouragement, sharing notes and lesson-related information, participating in discussions, completing assignments together, and helping friends who experience difficulties in understanding learning materials. Support from friends can also make students feel accepted, become more confident, and feel more willing to participate in learning activities.

However, friendship can also hinder learning activities when it involves excessive joking, chatting during lessons, postponing assignments, conflicts, teasing, and social exclusion. Therefore, friendships need to be built on mutual respect, care, and positive support. Guidance and counseling teachers and homeroom teachers also play a role in creating a healthy friendship environment through guidance, communication, and group learning activities that involve all students.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions (Optional)

The author was responsible for conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data collection, data analysis, writing the original draft, and reviewing and editing the manuscript.

Generative AI Disclosure

The author used ChatGPT, a generative AI tool, to assist with language translation and academic writing refinement during manuscript preparation. The author remains fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, integrity, and final content of the article.

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