

The Influence of Peer Support on High School Students' Public Speaking Skills

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Abstract. This research aims to determine the effect of peer support on the public speaking ability of high school students in East Jakarta. Public speaking is a critical communication skill that enhances students' self-confidence, clarity in delivering ideas, and ability to engage with audiences. Peer support, encompassing emotional encouragement, constructive feedback, and collaborative learning environments, plays a significant role in reducing anxiety and fostering confidence in public speaking settings. A quantitative approach was employed, involving 100 students who completed Likert-scale questionnaires. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, validity and reliability testing, and simple linear regression using SPSS. The results indicate a significant and positive effect of peer support on students' public speaking abilities, with a correlation coefficient of 0.713 and a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.508. This means that 51% of the variation in public speaking ability can be explained by peer support. The findings support the theory of social influence, emphasizing that the presence of supportive peers contributes meaningfully to the development of communication skills among adolescents. The study highlights the importance of fostering a positive peer environment in schools to enhance students' public speaking performance and recommends integrating peer-based strategies in educational programs to cultivate confident, articulate, and socially competent individuals.

Keywords: Peer Support, Public Speaking, High School Students, Social Influence, Communication Skills, Self-Confidence, Educational Psychology

Introduction

The ability to communicate effectively, especially in the form of public speaking, is an essential skill for students as future leaders and active contributors to society. In the context of senior high school students, public speaking plays a vital role in building self-confidence, articulating thoughts, and enhancing interpersonal communication skills. It also supports the development of critical thinking abilities and prepares students for academic, social, and professional challenges in the future. Public speaking is not merely about speaking fluently in front of an audience. It also involves organizing logical arguments, applying appropriate body language, and engaging interactively with the audience. These multifaceted skills are necessary in various contexts, from formal presentations to group discussions. As such, mastering public speaking empowers individuals to become more persuasive, confident, and effective communicators. In today's competitive and dynamic environment, these competencies are increasingly recognized as vital to personal and career success (Wahyuni & Costadinov, 2020).

Despite its importance, many high school students experience anxiety when speaking in public. Research conducted by Rahmawati (2020) reveals that up to 70% of high school students in Indonesia experience severe levels of public speaking anxiety. This anxiety stems from both internal factors – such as

low self-efficacy, low self-esteem, and negative thinking—and external factors, including audience size, unfamiliarity with the audience, social status, or fear of negative evaluation. These psychological barriers can significantly inhibit students' ability to communicate effectively in public settings. Based on Greenberger and Padesky's theory of anxiety dimensions, public speaking anxiety can manifest through behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and physiological responses. Students may avoid eye contact, experience trembling or increased heart rate, feel overwhelmed, or doubt their speaking ability. These symptoms create a cycle that undermines their confidence and motivation to improve their public speaking skills.

In response to these challenges, the presence of peer support has emerged as a critical social factor that can positively influence students' psychological readiness and skill acquisition. Peer support refers to the encouragement, assistance, and positive feedback that students receive from their classmates or close friends. This support can create a safe and constructive environment where students feel accepted and valued, ultimately reducing fear and increasing willingness to participate in public speaking activities. Peer support manifests in several key dimensions, such as emotional support, instrumental support, informational support, and appraisal support. Emotional support involves empathy, listening, and creating a comforting atmosphere. Instrumental support includes tangible help in preparing presentation materials or practicing speeches. Informational support provides constructive suggestions or advice on speech techniques, while appraisal support involves giving recognition and positive reinforcement that builds confidence (Shadrina & Sarwili, 2023).

According to Hartup (in Okaiani, 2022), peer influence is a significant psychosocial factor in adolescent development. Adolescents often seek validation from their peers, and positive peer interactions can foster motivation, learning, and self-esteem. Conversely, a lack of peer support or negative peer influences—such as criticism or indifference—can contribute to increased anxiety, reluctance to perform, and diminished learning outcomes. Santrock (in Okaiani, 2022) also emphasizes that peer interactions help adolescents evaluate ideas, build understanding, and participate in mutual learning processes, especially in collaborative environments like schools. The dynamic interaction between peer support and public speaking skills is particularly evident in educational settings where classroom activities require student presentations, debates, or verbal participation. Schools that encourage group-based learning and peer-assisted activities often observe improvements in students' confidence and communication competence. However, schools that overlook the social and emotional dimensions of student relationships may inadvertently limit students' capacity to develop expressive skills such as public speaking.

Moreover, statistical data from Indonesia's Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) highlight a concerning trend: the unemployment rate among vocational high school graduates remains the highest, reaching 10.16% in August 2019. This data indicates potential shortcomings in the educational process, particularly in equipping students with soft skills such as communication, collaboration, and leadership. Overloaded academic schedules and performance-based pressures often leave little room for holistic development, including the cultivation of expressive competencies. In light of these challenges, this study focuses on understanding how peer support contributes to the development of public speaking skills among high school students. Preliminary observations and interviews with counseling teachers reveal that schools have made efforts to enhance students' self-efficacy through seminars and training programs. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of such interventions may be amplified or diminished by the presence—or absence—of supportive peer relationships (Wijaya & Sahrani, 2020).

This research is therefore highly relevant. It aims to bridge the gap between cognitive training and social-emotional learning by examining how peer interactions influence students' public speaking abilities. Specifically, the study explores whether emotional and practical support from peers can reduce anxiety, improve preparation, and foster self-confidence in speaking contexts. It also investigates whether students who receive high levels of peer support exhibit better public speaking skills compared to those with minimal peer support. By assessing the perceived and measurable impact of peer support on communication competence, this study not only contributes to academic literature but also provides practical insights for educators, counselors, and policymakers. The findings may inform the development of peer mentoring programs, collaborative learning models, and school-based interventions that foster a more inclusive and empowering learning environment. Furthermore, the study sheds light on the broader significance of peer dynamics in adolescent psychological development, particularly in relation to confidence-building and

expressive behavior. In sum, as Indonesia continues to reform its education system to meet the demands of the 21st century, understanding the social factors that affect student performance becomes crucial. Public speaking is one such area that combines academic, emotional, and interpersonal dimensions. Peer support, as a low-cost and naturally occurring resource within the school environment, holds great potential in nurturing this important skill. Recognizing and optimizing this influence may play a pivotal role in improving student confidence, communication ability, and future employability (Meltareza & Pratama, 2021)

Methods

This study employed a quantitative research approach with a correlational design aimed at examining the relationship between peer support and students' public speaking skills. The method was chosen because it allows the researcher to objectively measure the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables through statistical analysis. The unit of analysis in this research is individual students at the senior high school (SMA) level who possess certain characteristics, namely: current enrollment as high school students, involvement in public speaking activities such as debates, presentations, or speech contests, and regular interactions with peers who are able to provide relevant support in the context of communication skill development (Muhajirin et al., 2024).

The target population comprises all SMA students in East Jakarta who are engaged in public speaking activities. From this population, a sample of 100 students was selected using purposive sampling techniques. The inclusion criteria were: (1) students who have participated in extracurricular or academic public speaking events, and (2) students who have received peer support related to speaking preparation. The number of samples was determined based on the minimum requirement to meet statistical reliability for correlational analysis. The data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on indicators of peer support and public speaking competence. The questionnaire consisted of both closed and open-ended items and was distributed directly to the selected SMA schools in East Jakarta.

The questionnaire comprised three major sections: demographic information, indicators of peer support (emotional, instrumental, appraisal, and informational support), and indicators of public speaking ability (confidence, clarity, emotional control, audience interaction). Responses were measured using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Validity testing was conducted using item-total correlation, where each item's correlation with the total score was assessed. All items were found valid, with correlation coefficients (r -count) greater than the critical value (r -table = 0.196 for $N = 100$).

Reliability testing was performed using Cronbach's Alpha. The results showed a coefficient of 0.905 for the peer support variable and 0.856 for public speaking, both exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.6, indicating that the instruments were reliable (Sugiyono, 2017).

Result and Discussion

The study involved 100 senior high school students from East Jakarta who participated as respondents by completing a structured questionnaire. The demographic characteristics showed a nearly equal gender distribution with 52% female and 48% male respondents. Most participants were 18 years old (59%), with others aged 17 (22%), 19 (14%), and 16 (5%). Descriptive statistics were used to analyze responses related to peer support and public speaking ability. The results revealed a strong perception of peer support among the students. For example, 46% of respondents strongly agreed and 36% agreed that their peers encouraged them when speaking in public, resulting in a mean score of 4.18, categorized as "very good." Similarly, emotional support during presentation preparation received a mean score of 3.9, reflecting a "good" level of peer involvement. Furthermore, students affirmed receiving practical support in preparing presentation materials (mean = 3.97), practice opportunities (mean = 4.05), and useful feedback (mean = 4.11).

The students also showed positive indicators in public speaking performance. Respondents agreed that peer support enhanced their confidence in public speaking, reflected in a mean score of 4.17. A majority also reported feeling more capable of expressing their ideas clearly (mean = 3.87), and more confident after receiving encouragement from their peers (mean = 3.92). These results highlight the consistent impact of peer support across emotional, instrumental, and motivational domains. A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of peer support (X) on public speaking ability (Y). The regression equation obtained was:

$$Y = 4.883 + 0.460X$$

This positive coefficient implies that as peer support improves, public speaking ability increases proportionally. The R^2 value of 0.508 indicates that 50.8% of the variance in students' public speaking skills can be explained by peer support, while the remaining 49.2% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study. The **t-test** result was 10.054 ($p < 0.001$), which is significantly greater than the critical t-value of 1.985. This confirms that peer support has a statistically significant effect on students' public speaking ability. The **F-test** also supports this finding, with $F = 101.089$ and a significance value of 0.000, indicating that the regression model is valid and meaningful (Beno et al., 2022).

Additionally, validity and reliability tests were performed. All items demonstrated strong validity, with correlation values above the r-table threshold of 0.196. Cronbach's alpha values were 0.905 for the peer support variable and 0.856 for public speaking, both exceeding the 0.6 threshold, thereby confirming the reliability of the instrument. Overall, the data suggest a strong, positive, and statistically significant correlation between peer support and public speaking ability among high school students. These findings confirm that a supportive peer environment contributes substantially to the development of students' communication competence, especially in public speaking contexts.

This study aimed to examine the influence of peer support on public speaking skills among high school students in East Jakarta. Based on the results of data analysis using linear regression and descriptive statistics, it was found that peer support has a significant and positive impact on the development of students' public speaking abilities. The regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.460$) and the significance value ($p < 0.05$) both indicate that students who receive higher levels of support from their peers tend to exhibit better performance in public speaking activities. Moreover, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.508$) suggests that peer support accounts for approximately 51% of the variation in public speaking skills, while the remaining 49% may be attributed to other factors not examined in this research (Setiawati, 2020).

From a descriptive perspective, the data revealed high levels of peer support as perceived by the students. Many respondents strongly agreed that their friends encouraged them, helped them prepare for presentations, provided constructive feedback, and offered emotional reassurance. For instance, the average response to the statement "My friends encourage me when I speak in public" was 4.18 out of 5, which falls into the "very good" category. Similarly, the support provided during practice sessions and material preparation was also rated highly, showing that peers are actively involved in helping each other develop communication skills. These findings are consistent with previous studies (e.g., Wahyuni & Costadinov, 2020) that underscore the significance of social support—especially from peers—in boosting self-confidence and reducing public speaking anxiety. Peer support functions not only as a source of motivation and encouragement but also plays a critical role in lowering psychological barriers, such as fear of judgment, stage fright, and self-doubt. In turn, this enhances students' willingness to participate in class discussions, group presentations, debates, and other oral communication contexts (Fitria, 2022).

The positive relationship between peer support and public speaking proficiency also reflects the broader social and developmental dynamics of adolescence. According to Hartup and Santrock (in Oktaiani, 2022), adolescents are strongly influenced by their peer groups, and such interactions provide a safe space for learning, practicing, and internalizing various social competencies. Therefore, an encouraging peer environment creates a reinforcing cycle: students who feel supported are more likely to take risks, perform well, and continue improving. However, it is also essential to note that peer influence can have a dual effect. While positive reinforcement contributes to growth, negative peer environments may hinder performance or reinforce communication anxiety. Thus, the role of educators and school counselors becomes critical in fostering peer groups that cultivate mutual respect, empathy, and supportiveness (Marandof, 2024).

Overall, this study provides empirical evidence that peer support significantly contributes to enhancing high school students' public speaking abilities. It highlights the need for schools to promote positive peer interactions through structured group activities, collaborative learning models, and student-led communication workshops. These findings also open avenues for future research to explore the interplay between peer support and other contributing factors such as parental involvement, teacher feedback, and personality traits.

Conclusion

This study concludes that peer support has a significant and positive influence on the public speaking abilities of high school students in East Jakarta. The statistical analysis shows that peer support accounts for 51% of the variation in students' public speaking abilities, as indicated by the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.508$). The regression analysis produced a positive coefficient ($Y = 4.883 + 0.460X_1$), suggesting that the better the quality of peer support, the higher the students' public speaking competence. The findings were further supported by the results of hypothesis testing, where the t-value (10.054) exceeded the critical value (1.985), and the significance value was less than 0.05, affirming the strength of the relationship between peer support and students' public speaking skills. The data suggest that aspects such as emotional encouragement, constructive feedback, and opportunities for collaborative preparation with peers play a vital role in boosting students' confidence and communicative effectiveness in public settings.

While the study highlights the impact of peer interaction, it also acknowledges that 49% of the variance in public speaking performance is influenced by other variables not explored in this research. These may include parental involvement, school environment, instructional methods, personality traits, or even anxiety levels. From a theoretical perspective, the results support the theory of social influence, particularly in the domain of peer dynamics and social learning. Peer relationships offer emotional and instrumental reinforcement that significantly contributes to skill acquisition. This expands existing literature by emphasizing the informal yet powerful role of peer networks in academic and interpersonal development.

Practically, the findings have implications for students, educators, parents, and schools. Schools should foster a socially supportive environment where students feel encouraged by their peers to engage in public speaking. Teachers can incorporate peer collaboration in classroom activities to enhance students' confidence. Parents should also support their children's social development by encouraging participation in group learning activities. Despite the strengths of the findings, the study is limited by its use of a correlational design, its focus on one geographic area, and reliance on self-report questionnaires, which may introduce biases. Future research should consider experimental or longitudinal designs, use diverse populations, and include additional variables such as family support, personality, and teaching styles to build a more comprehensive model of factors affecting students' public speaking abilities.

In conclusion, this research underscores the essential role of peer support in shaping students' public speaking skills. These findings provide a solid foundation for designing educational interventions and for further exploration into how social contexts influence the development of key communication competencies.

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