



Peer Interaction and Emotional Resilience Among Early Adolescents: A Correlational Study of Junior Secondary School Students

Nadya Marsyah¹, Itryah^{2*}

^{1,2} Department of Psychology Bina Darma University, Indonesian

ABSTRACT: This study aimed to empirically investigate the relationship between peer interaction and emotional resilience among seventh-grade students at MTs As-Salam Palembang. A quantitative research approach was employed in this study. This study employed a quantitative research method. The population consisted of 263 seventh-grade students at MTs As-Salam Palembang, distributed across six classes: 44 students in class VII A, 44 students in class VII B, 44 students in class VII C, 44 students in class VII D, 43 students in class VII E, and 44 students in class VII F. Based on the Isaac and Michael sampling table with a 5% margin of error, 149 students were selected as the research sample. Meanwhile, the remaining 101 students were involved in the instrument tryout. Data were collected using questionnaires administered both directly and through online platforms. The research instruments employed a Likert scale consisting of the Emotional Resilience Scale and the Peer Interaction Scale. Based on the results of the simple linear regression analysis, the correlation coefficient was $r = 0.508$ with a significance value of $p = 0.000$, indicating a highly significant positive relationship between Peer Interaction and Emotional Resilience among seventh-grade students at MTs As-Salam Palembang. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.258, indicating that Peer Interaction contributed 25.8% to Emotional Resilience, while the remaining 74.2% was influenced by other factors outside the variables examined in this study. There is a very significant relationship between peer interaction and emotional resilience among seventh-grade students at MTs As-Salam Palembang. This means that the better the interaction between students and their peers, the higher their emotional resilience. Conversely, the lower the quality of peer interaction, the lower the students' emotional resilience tends to be.

KEYWORDS: Peer Interaction, Emotional Resilience, Early Adolescents

INTRODUCTION

Present Education plays an important role in developing individuals comprehensively, including their cognitive, affective, and social capacities (Hidayat, 2022). Students are not only expected to achieve academic success but are also required to adapt to various academic and social demands throughout the learning process (Mayasari et al., 2022). Increasing academic workloads, achievement pressures, and social dynamics within schools may create psychological challenges that affect students' well-being and ability to adapt (Wahyuni, 2021; Abdillah & Jatmiko, 2025).

These challenges are particularly relevant for seventh-grade students at Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs), who are generally in the early stages of adolescence. This developmental period is characterized by significant physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes, as well as a transition from elementary to secondary education. Adolescents are expected to develop greater independence, establish their identities, and build broader social relationships (Andriani et al., 2025). The transition to a new educational environment may require students to adjust to different learning systems, more complex academic demands, and new social relationships, potentially leading to anxiety, low self-confidence, and concerns about social acceptance (Andriani, 2025; Aningtyas & Setyawati, 2025).

One important psychological capacity during this period is emotional resilience. Emotional resilience refers to an individual's ability to remain calm, manage emotional responses, and recover from challenging emotional experiences. According to Bernard and Pires (Siregar et al., 2023), emotional resilience is reflected in the ability to remain calm, control aggressive impulses or withdrawal, and recover quickly from emotional challenges. Students with good emotional resilience are more capable of maintaining positive attitudes and functioning effectively when facing academic, social, and emotional difficulties. Conversely, low emotional resilience may be associated with anxiety, frustration, decreased motivation, and difficulties in coping with developmental demands (Chintya, 2024; Salsabila et al., 2024).

Emotional regulation plays an important role in the development of emotional resilience. The ability to recognize, understand,



control, and appropriately express emotions enables students to respond to stressful situations more adaptively and reduces the negative effects of stress (Troy et al., 2023). Students who are able to regulate their emotions effectively are generally better equipped to cope with failure, academic pressure, and interpersonal conflicts, which subsequently contributes to the development of resilience (Aini et al., 2025; Putri et al., 2023). Thus, emotional regulation and resilience are closely related in supporting students' ability to cope with challenging experiences (Sukmaningpraja & Santhoso, 2023).

The development of emotional resilience does not occur independently but is influenced by both individual and environmental factors. Bernard and Pires (Siregar et al., 2023) identify irrational beliefs and inadequate coping skills as negative factors that may weaken emotional resilience, whereas positive thinking and supportive social environments may strengthen it. Among adolescents, peers constitute an important component of the social environment because adolescents increasingly depend on peer relationships for emotional support, social acceptance, and a sense of belonging (Santrock, 2012).

Peer interaction is a reciprocal process involving communication, cooperation, exchange of opinions, emotional support, and mutual influence among individuals of similar age and maturity. Through peer interaction, adolescents learn social norms, develop communication and cooperation skills, resolve conflicts, and adjust their behavior to their social environment (Natogar, 2022). Positive peer relationships can provide emotional support and a sense of security, whereas problematic peer relationships may contribute to social and emotional difficulties (Mustikhatul et al., 2022; Rahman et al., 2023).

According to Sears (Syafi'i & Mahmudah, 2023), peer interaction is characterized by several processes, including the influence of peers as a persuasive source, the greater influence of group opinions compared with other sources, the influence of groups on attitudes and behavior, self-evaluation through comparison with peers, strong attachment to the peer group, and the reinforcement of shared group opinions. These characteristics indicate that peer interaction may play an important role in shaping adolescents' emotional responses and adjustment.

Preliminary observations conducted by the researcher at MTs As-Salam Palembang on April 15–17, 2026, indicated that some seventh-grade students experienced difficulties in managing their emotional responses and peer relationships. Several students were observed becoming easily upset or angry when facing interpersonal conflicts, withdrawing from social groups, crying after receiving reprimands, or responding to minor conflicts with raised voices and harsh words. Some students also required considerable time to recover emotionally after experiencing disappointment or conflict, which affected their concentration and participation in learning activities.

Preliminary interviews with a guidance and counseling teacher and three seventh-grade students further indicated difficulties in maintaining emotional stability, controlling withdrawal or aggressive responses, and recovering from emotionally challenging situations. Students reported experiences of anxiety, fear of rejection, prolonged sadness or anger, and difficulties concentrating after interpersonal conflicts or reprimands. These findings suggest that some students may not yet have optimal emotional resilience. Difficulties were also observed in students' peer interactions. Some students tended to remain passive in groups, avoid expressing different opinions, and prioritize peer acceptance over advice from teachers or parents. Other students demonstrated emotional reactions during disagreements, such as raising their voices, withdrawing, or engaging in minor physical aggression. These findings indicate that peer relationships may be closely associated with students' emotional responses when facing social challenges.

The preliminary questionnaire administered to 30 seventh-grade students on April 15, 2026, provided additional support for these observations. Regarding emotional resilience, only 33.3% of students reported being able to remain calm when facing stressful situations, 23% reported being able to control the urge to become angry or withdraw during conflicts, and 36.7% reported being able to recover quickly after experiencing failure or disappointment. Regarding peer interaction, 35% of students reported being easily influenced by friends' invitations, 36.7% tended to follow group opinions rather than their parents' advice, 33.3% experienced changes in attitudes or behavior due to peer influence, 20% frequently compared themselves with peers, 37% continued to follow group decisions despite having different opinions, and 46.7% felt more confident in an opinion when it was supported by their friends.

Previous research conducted by Onedella and Fatimah (2024), entitled *The Relationship Between Peer Interaction and Emotional Maturity Among Adolescents Living in Dormitories*, found a significant positive relationship between peer interaction and emotional maturity. Peer interaction contributed 17.1% to emotional maturity, while the remaining 82.9% was associated with other factors, such as family, media, and personal experiences. Although this finding demonstrates the importance of peer interaction



in adolescents' emotional development, research specifically examining the relationship between peer interaction and emotional resilience among seventh-grade students at MTs remains limited.

The present study therefore focuses on the relationship between peer interaction and emotional resilience among seventh-grade students at MTs As-Salam Palembang. Understanding this relationship is important because early adolescence is a critical developmental period in which peer relationships become increasingly influential, while students simultaneously face significant emotional and academic demands. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of guidance and counseling programs aimed at strengthening students' peer relationships and emotional resilience.

Based on the background described above, this study aims to determine the relationship between peer interaction and emotional resilience among seventh-grade students at MTs As-Salam Palembang.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design and Setting

This study employed a quantitative research method. According to Sugiyono (2022), quantitative research is a scientific approach that follows methodological principles, including being concrete or empirical, objective, measurable, rational, and systematic. The data in this study were presented in numerical form and analyzed using statistical techniques.

Participants

The population consisted of 263 seventh-grade students at MTs As-Salam Palembang, distributed across six classes: 44 students in class VII A, 44 students in class VII B, 44 students in class VII C, 44 students in class VII D, 43 students in class VII E, and 44 students in class VII F. Based on the Isaac and Michael sampling table with a 5% margin of error, 149 students were selected as the research sample. Meanwhile, the remaining 101 students were involved in the instrument tryout.

Instruments

The data collection method used is the scale method, with two types of scales, namely the emotional resilience scale and the peer interaction scale. The attitude scale is a measurement tool used to determine an individual's attitude, opinion, perception, or response tendency toward an object, event, or specific phenomenon through a series of statements that must be responded to by the research subjects. This scale aims to reveal psychological aspects that cannot be directly observed, such as beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies of an individual toward an attitude object (Ridho & Nuryahya, 2025). The scale is constructed in two forms of statements, namely favorable and unfavorable statements. Each variable is measured using four response options, namely SS (strongly agree), S (agree), TS (disagree), and STS (strongly disagree). Scoring for each item is done hierarchically according to the type of statement, whether favorable or unfavorable. This research uses a Likert scale with four answer choices because this scale can more clearly measure the attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of respondents toward the given statements. The use of four answer categories also aims to avoid neutral choices, thereby encouraging respondents to determine an attitude tendency that aligns with their own conditions.

Data Analysis

Item validity was tested using item-total correlation coefficients, with a minimum acceptable criterion of > 0.30 (Azwar, 2012). Instrument reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. Prior to hypothesis testing, assumption tests were conducted, comprising a normality test (Kolmogorov-Smirnov) and a linearity test. Hypothesis testing was carried out using simple linear regression together with correlation analysis to determine the strength of the relationship between variables. All analyses were performed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 27 for Windows.

RESULTS

Instrument Validity and Reliability

The Emotional Resilience Scale initially consisted of 60 items. The item analysis process was conducted in two stages with a minimum item trial correlation coefficient threshold of > 0.30 . Thus, the number of items in the Emotional Resilience Scale used in the study amounted to 58 items, with the lowest value being 0.320 and the highest being 0.757. Peer Interaction Scale consisting of 60 items. In the first stage of analysis, 3 items were found to be invalid (dropped), namely items number 6, 50, and 59. All were declared valid with a range of the lowest value being 0.313 and the highest being 0.816. Thus, the number of items used in the

research amounted to 57 items. The results of the reliability test show that the Peer Interaction scale has a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.973 with 57 items, while the Emotional Resilience scale has a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.970 with 58 items.

Descriptive Statistics

An overview of the research data is presented in the form of a descriptive table for each variable being studied. The data description for the Peer Interaction and Emotional Resilience variables is presented in the following table:

Table 1. Descriptive Test

Variable	Empirical Score				Hypothetical Score			
	Mean	SD	Xmin	Xmax	Mean	SD	Xmin	Xmax
Emotional Resilience	159,83	19,46	109	198	145	29	58	232
Peer Interaction	150,48	22,19	100	194	142,5	28,5	57	228

The empirical mean score for the Emotional Resilience variable was 159.83, with a standard deviation of 19.46, while the empirical mean score for the Peer Interaction variable was 150.48, with a standard deviation of 22.19. Meanwhile, the hypothetical mean score for the Emotional Resilience variable was 145, with a standard deviation of 29, whereas the hypothetical mean score for the Peer Interaction variable was 142.5, with a standard deviation of 28.5.

Assumption Tests

To ensure that the research data meets the requirements for statistical analysis, assumption tests are conducted first before hypothesis testing. The assumption tests used in this study are the normality test and the linearity test. The normality test is used to determine whether the data on the Peer Interaction and Emotional Resilience variables are normally distributed. The linearity test is used to determine whether there is a linear relationship between the Peer Interaction variable as the independent variable and Emotional Resilience as the dependent variable.

Table 2. Normality Test

Variable	KS-Z	P	Note
Emotional Resilience	0,061	0,200	Normal
Peer Interaction	0,060	0,200	Normal

The Emotional Resilience variable obtained a significance value of $p = 0.200$, while the Peer Interaction variable also obtained a significance value of $p = 0.200$. Both values are greater than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data for both research variables are normally distributed.

Table 3. Linierity Test

Variable	F	P	Noted
Emotional Resilience (Y) & Peer Interaction (X)	52,026	0,000	Linier

Based on Table 3, an F-value of 52.026 was obtained with a significance value of $p = 0.000$. The F-value indicates the degree of linearity in the relationship between Peer Interaction and Emotional Resilience. Meanwhile, the significance value of less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) indicates that the relationship between Peer Interaction and Emotional Resilience is linear and statistically significant.

Hypothesis Testing

In this study, the hypothesis is tested to determine whether there is a relationship between the variables of Peer Interaction and Emotional Resilience. Since the research data is quantitative, hypothesis testing is conducted using simple linear regression analysis techniques. The results of this analysis are presented as follows.

Table 4. Simple Linear Regression

Variable	Correlation Coefficient (r)	R Square	p-Value	Noted
Emotional Resilience (Y) & Peer Interaction (X)	0,508	0,258	0,000	highly significant

Linear regression analysis, the correlation coefficient was $r = 0.508$ with $p = 0.000$, indicating a highly significant relationship between Peer Interaction and Emotional Resilience among seventh-grade students at MTs As-Salam Palembang. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.258$) indicates that Peer Interaction contributes 25.8% to Emotional Resilience, while the remaining 74.2% is influenced by other factors outside the variables examined in this study.

DISCUSSION

These results indicate a highly significant relationship between peer interaction and emotional resilience among seventh-grade students at MTs As-Salam Palembang. This means that the better the interaction students have with their peers, the higher their emotional resilience tends to be. Conversely, the lower the quality of peer interaction, the lower the students' emotional resilience tends to be. This finding is supported by Santrock (2012), who explains that peers serve as important agents of socialization during adolescence. Positive interactions with peers, such as open communication, cooperation, and mutual support, can help adolescents feel accepted and valued while supporting their social and emotional development.

This finding is also supported by Bernard and Pires (as cited in Siregar et al., 2023), who state that emotional resilience is influenced by both negative and positive factors. Negative factors include irrational beliefs and a lack of coping skills, which may weaken an individual's ability to deal with pressure. Meanwhile, positive factors include positive thinking habits and support from the environment, including positive and supportive interactions with peers. Peer interaction is one form of environmental support that can strengthen students' emotional resilience. When students have positive relationships with their peers, they receive social support that can help them cope with problems and pressure. Therefore, the better the positive interaction students receive from their peer environment, the higher their emotional resilience tends to be.

The results also showed an R Square value of 0.258, indicating that peer interaction contributes 25.8% to emotional resilience. This contribution can be understood through the tendency of students at MTs As-Salam Palembang to initiate communication, behave in a friendly manner, and build positive social relationships with their peers. Greeting others reflects openness in interaction because students demonstrate a willingness to initiate communication and maintain relationships with their peers. This finding is consistent with the aspect of openness within groups proposed by Partowisastro (as cited in Natogar et al., 2022), which provides students with opportunities to communicate, feel accepted, and build social relationships with their peers.

Based on the categorization results, the majority of seventh-grade students at MTs As-Salam Palembang had a high level of peer interaction, with 85 students (57%) classified in the high category, while 64 students (43%) were classified in the low category. For the emotional resilience variable, 81 students (54.4%) were classified in the high category, while 68 students (45.6%) were classified in the low category. These results indicate that the majority of students had high levels of both peer interaction and emotional resilience.

The high level of peer interaction among seventh-grade students at MTs As-Salam Palembang may support the development of emotional resilience during the learning process, as early adolescence is a period in which students begin to view peers as an important source of social support. Positive and frequent interactions with peers provide students with opportunities to share experiences, discuss learning difficulties, provide encouragement, and help one another when facing academic demands or personal problems. These conditions can help students feel accepted, have someone with whom they can express their feelings, and avoid



facing difficulties alone. Consequently, students may become better able to regulate their emotions, cope with pressure, and adapt to various situations within the school environment. This is consistent with Santrock's (2012) theory, which explains that peer relationships play an important role in adolescents' social and emotional development, including providing support, enhancing a sense of belonging, and developing the ability to cope with various challenges. Thus, high levels of peer interaction can serve as a source of support that helps students develop emotional resilience, enabling them to better withstand and adapt to obstacles encountered during the learning process.

The findings of this study are also supported by the research conducted by Onedella and Fatimah (2024), as identified in previous research, which found a positive and significant relationship between peer interaction and emotional maturity among adolescents living in dormitories. The study showed that peer interaction made an effective contribution of 17.1% to emotional maturity. This finding further supports the results of the present study, indicating that the quality of social relationships with peers is associated with adolescents' emotional conditions.

Nevertheless, the contribution of peer interaction to emotional resilience in this study was only 25.8%. This indicates that students' emotional resilience is not entirely determined by peer interaction. There are still 74.2% of other factors that contribute to students' emotional resilience but were not examined in this study. This remaining variance suggests that emotional resilience is not solely related to peer interaction but may also be influenced by other factors proposed by Bernard and Pires (as cited in Siregar et al., 2023), namely negative factors such as irrational beliefs and a lack of coping skills, as well as positive factors such as positive thinking habits and environmental support.

Based on the research findings and data analysis presented above, it can be concluded that the research hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is a positive and significant relationship between peer interaction and emotional resilience among seventh-grade students at MTs As-Salam Palembang. These findings indicate that the better the peer interaction experienced by students, the higher their emotional resilience tends to be. Conversely, the lower the quality of peer interaction, the lower the students' emotional resilience tends to be. The results of this study demonstrate that peer interaction is one of the factors contributing to students' emotional resilience, although other factors outside the scope of this study also play a role.

CONCLUSION

The results of the research and data analysis that have been conducted, it can be concluded that the research hypothesis is accepted, namely that there is a very significant relationship between peer interaction and emotional resilience in seventh-grade students at MTs As-Salam Palembang. The analysis results show a correlation coefficient value of $r = 0.508$ with a significance value of $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.01$). The contribution value of the Peer Interaction variable $R^2 = 0.258$ (25.8%) to Emotional Resilience.

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