

Peer Counseling as a Strategy for Developing Critical Thinking Skills Among Adolescents in Islamic Educational Settings

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DOI: [10.38073/pelita.v3i2.4875](https://doi.org/10.38073/pelita.v3i2.4875)

Received: 4 March 2026

Revised: 1 May 2026

Accepted: 5 May 2026

Published: 7 May 2026

Abstract

The era of information disruption and massive exposure to social media trigger cognitive vulnerability and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) among adolescents, requiring educational institutions to proactively equip students with critical thinking skills. This study aims to explore the role of peer counseling as a strategy for developing adolescent critical thinking in an Islamic educational environment. Using a qualitative approach with a case study design at SMA Future Gate Putri Boarding Bekasi, data were collected through non-participatory observation, in-depth interviews with counselors and counselees, and document studies. The results indicate that peer counseling effectively functions as cognitive scaffolding for students. Through the application of the Plus-Minus-Implication (PMI) method and the principle of *Tabayyun* (verification), this intervention facilitates emotional regulation through psychological equality, which is a prerequisite for achieving rational thinking. The program successfully transformed students' reactive attitudes into proactive ones, improved cognitive independence, fostered assertiveness, and reduced dependence on digital trends. In conclusion, peer counseling has proven to be a comprehensive method that successfully integrates 21st-century skills with Islamic character values to respond to the challenges of the disruption era.

Keywords: *Adolescents, Boarding School, Critical Thinking, Islamic Education, Peer Counseling.*

Abstrak

Era disrupsi informasi dan masifnya paparan media sosial memicu kerentanan kognitif dan *Fear of Missing Out* (FoMO) pada remaja, sehingga menuntut institusi pendidikan untuk proaktif membekali siswa dengan kecakapan berpikir kritis. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi peran konseling sebaya sebagai strategi pengembangan berpikir kritis remaja di lingkungan pendidikan Islam. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berdesain studi kasus di SMA Future Gate Putri Boarding Bekasi, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi non-partisipatif, wawancara mendalam terhadap konselor dan konseli, serta studi dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konseling sebaya (Duta BK) efektif berfungsi sebagai perancah kognitif (*scaffolding*) bagi siswa. Melalui penerapan metode *Plus-Minus-Implikasi* (PMI) dan prinsip *Tabayyun*, intervensi ini memfasilitasi regulasi emosi melalui kesetaraan psikologis, yang merupakan prasyarat tercapainya pemikiran rasional. Program ini berhasil mentransformasi sikap reaktif siswa menjadi proaktif, meningkatkan kemandirian kognitif, menumbuhkan asertivitas, serta mereduksi ketergantungan pada tren digital. Kesimpulannya, konseling sebaya terbukti sebagai metode komprehensif yang sukses mengintegrasikan keterampilan abad ke-21 dengan nilai-nilai karakter Islam untuk merespons tantangan era disrupsi.

Kata Kunci: *Asrama, Berpikir Kritis, Konseling Sebaya, Pendidikan Islam, Remaja.*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology has significantly influenced the ease of accessing information. However, the imbalance between high information exposure and low cognitive filtering abilities has led to serious psychological consequences for adolescents. This phenomenon is reflected in the prevalence of social media trends that trigger blind conformity, such as the long queues for viral products or participation in challenges on TikTok and Instagram. Intensive social media exposure triggers an increase in Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), a social anxiety regarding being left behind by trends.¹ Furthermore, FoMO does not only impact mental health but also degrades the cognitive functions of adolescents, making them prone to consuming information superficially and losing the ability to evaluate issues rationally.²

In facing this information disruption, the ability to think critically becomes a fundamental life skill. Educational institutions are required not merely to respond passively to changes but to proactively equip students with digital literacy and analytical sharpness.³ Critical thinking skills have proven to be a powerful mediator between educational institutional support and mentally and cognitively healthy behaviors in students in the digital era.⁴ One effective strategy initiated by educational institutions to build this skill is through peer counseling or peer mentoring. The involvement of peers has been proven to increase students' cognitive engagement, build self-confidence, and facilitate a more open exchange of thoughts.⁵

Theoretically and empirically, peer counseling or peer support has been recognized for its effectiveness in various educational contexts. Systematic reviews show that peer mentoring contributes significantly to social integration, psychological well-being, and students' academic success.⁶ Specifically within Islamic educational environments, the peer tutor model has proven effective in improving students' practical

¹ Basti Tetteng et al., "The Moderating Role of Social Media Usage in the Relationship between Self-Confidence and Fear of Missing out among High School Students," *Cogent Psychology* 13, no. 1 (2025): 2604330, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2025.2604330>.

² Joaquín Ungaretti et al., "Cyberbullying Perpetration Among Spanish Adults: The Roles of Fear of Missing Out and Critical Thinking," *Societies* 15, no. 9 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc15090249>.

³ M. Faiz Chishomuddin et al., "Digital Literacy as a Strategic Solution to Overcome Fear of Missing Out Behavior," *International Conference on Psychology and Education (ICPE)* 4, no. 1 (2025), <https://metatags.io/>.

⁴ Bilal Khaleel Younis, "From Digital Literacy to Action: The Impact of Digital Mental Health Literacy and Critical Thinking on Mental Health Behaviors in University Populations," *Current Psychology* 44, no. 11 (2025): 10851–64, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-025-07930-9>.

⁵ Crystal I. Bryce et al., "Hope Longitudinally Predicts Achievement: Mediation of Cognitive Engagement, Teacher, and Peer Support," *The Journal of Educational Research* 117, no. 6 (2024): 333–43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2024.2401879>; Farid Noor Romadlon, "English Peer Counseling to Engage Students' Speaking Confidence and Motivation in Higher Education," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 14, no. 1 (2022): 821–32, <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v14i1.1869>.

⁶ Huong-Giang Le et al., "The Benefits of Peer Mentoring in Higher Education: Findings from a Systematic Review," *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education*, 2024, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1447398>; Juan I. Venegas-Muggli et al., "The Impact of Peer-Mentoring on the Academic Success of Underrepresented College Students," *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice* 25, no. 3 (2023): 554–71, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025121995988>.

skills.⁷ Furthermore, in the era of digital disruption, peer counseling among mosque youth has significantly fostered self-control and wisdom in using social media.⁸ School Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers have also begun to adopt this humanistic approach by positioning themselves as facilitators who rely on peer group dynamics to stimulate students' empathy and critical thinking.⁹

Although previous literature has extensively discussed the benefits of peer counseling in terms of emotional and academic support,¹⁰ there remains a gap in the literature regarding the specific use of peer counseling as an instrument for "cognitive development" (critical thinking) amidst the threat of FoMO in a boarding school environment. Islamic boarding school-based education has unique sociocultural dynamics. Recent studies have found that boarding school students often hesitate to access formal counseling services (BK teachers) due to structural barriers, social stigma, concerns about being considered weak in faith, and the strong cultural norm of obedience in pesantren.¹¹ On the other hand, BK teachers often experience overload and emotional pressure due to a ratio that is disproportionate to the number of students they must handle.¹² Consequently, the transfer of individual problem-solving skills often does not run effectively.¹³ Based on these literature gaps and practical issues, this study offers novelty by repositioning the role of peer counseling—not merely as a space for affective support, but as a cognitive scaffolding to build the critical thinking of adolescent girls at SMA Future Gate Putri Boarding Bekasi. This study examines how peer interaction in a boarding environment can bridge the limitations of formal counseling access while fortifying students against the degradation of rational thinking caused by digital information flows. The results of this study are expected to serve as a strategic reference in designing holistic guidance and counseling services, where peers act as agents of intellectual transformation in Islamic educational environments.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method with a case study approach to explore in depth the implementation of peer counseling at SMA Future Gate Putri Boarding Bekasi

⁷ Dewi Zainul Alfi and Khoirotul Idawati, "Efektivitas Model Pembelajaran Tutor Sebaya Dalam Meningkatkan Kemampuan Membaca Al-Qur'an Santri Pada Program Pengajian Ba'da Subuh Di Pondok Pesantren Tebuireng," *DINAMIKA : Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan Dan Keislaman* 7, no. 2 (2022): 27–47, <https://doi.org/10.32764/dinamika.v7i2.2936>.

⁸ Ahmad Lailatus Sibyan et al., "Konseling Sebaya dalam Penggunaan Media Sosial di Era Disrupsi Self Control Pada Remaja Masjid," *Al Irsyad : Jurnal Bimbingan Konseling Islam* 13, no. 2 (2022): 41–59, <https://doi.org/10.15548/jbki.v13i2.4734>.

⁹ Enjelita Minding and Matilda Pia Bone, "The Strategic Role of School Counselors in Guiding Students to Face Peer Pressure at SMA Negeri 4 Kupang," *TOFEDU: The Future of Education Journal* 4, no. 9 (2025): 5898–903, <https://doi.org/10.61445/tofedu.v4i9.1445>.

¹⁰ Le et al., "The Benefits of Peer Mentoring in Higher Education."

¹¹ Faiz Musthofa Abbas and Sapari, "Dinamika Psikologis Santri Dalam Mengakses Layanan Bimbingan Dan Konseling Di Pesantren," *Counselia; Jurnal Bimbingan Konseling Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 2 (2025): 349–61, <https://doi.org/10.31943/counselia.v6i2.453>.

¹² Zakiya Nur Hanifah and Dian Purbo Utomo, "Dukungan Sosial Sebagai Faktor Penunjang Kesejahteraan Emosional Guru Bimbingan Konseling SMP Negeri Di Kecamatan Gemolong," *Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Pendidikan (JKIP)* 6, no. 3 (2025): 1000–1014, <https://doi.org/10.55583/jkip.v6i3.1456>.

¹³ Ipung Hananto et al., "Strategi Pemberian Bantuan Problem Solving Bagi Siswa," *Jurnal Pengabdian Pedagogika* 1, no. 2 (2023): 57–66.

and its impact on the development of students' critical thinking skills. Through this approach, the researcher seeks to capture the natural dynamics during the counseling process, including interaction patterns, self-expression, and the construction of the participants' reflective mindsets. In its execution, the researcher acts as a non-participatory observer who is physically present at the location but does not intervene in the counseling activities. This passive presence aims to ensure that the data obtained remains pure and representative of the actual conditions in the field, while still upholding research ethics, confidentiality, and the comfort of participants during face-to-face interviews.¹⁴

The data sources in this study are classified into primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through purposive sampling, involving one student as a peer counselor, one student as a counselee, and one Guidance and Counseling (BK) teacher as the Coordinator. The selection of the counselor and counselee was based on their track record of experience and the consistency of their involvement in the peer counseling program for three consecutive years, thus they are considered capable of providing a deep and comprehensive perspective regarding the program's effectiveness. As a complement, the researcher also utilizes secondary data sourced from official school documents, counseling records, and scientific literature relevant to the topics of peer counseling and adolescent cognitive development.

To obtain valid data, this study applies the principle of triangulation through three main data collection techniques. The researcher conducted non-participatory observations focused on interaction patterns and counselee responses, in-depth interviews with an open format to explore perceptions and changes in participants' critical thinking, and documentation studies of activity archives and school program evaluation reports.¹⁵ Once the data was collected, the analysis process was carried out through an interactive thematic approach, referring to the Miles and Huberman model. This analysis phase includes data reduction to select and simplify raw information, data display in the form of organized descriptive narratives, and concludes with conclusion drawing and verification to provide an interpretation that fully addresses the research problem focus.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation and Organization of Peer Counseling in an Islamic-Based Boarding Environment

The implementation of peer counseling at SMA Future Gate Putri Boarding Bekasi is organized in a structured manner under the auspices of Guidance and Counseling (BK), with a specific identity known as “Duta BK” (BK Ambassadors). The existence of Duta BK is separate from the student council (OSIS) and was specifically initiated to respond to the psychosocial dynamics of the students. The BK Coordinator, Mrs. Najma, explained the background of this program:

“This program was initiated... to empower the children so they can learn. The

¹⁴ Hardani Hardani et al., *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif & Kuantitatif* (CV. Pustaka Ilmu, 2020).

¹⁵ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (SAGE Publications, 2017).

character of children post-COVID is different, from their way of thinking to how they socialize. Therefore, a mediator is needed to guide them. As for peer counselors, it has been running since the ambassadors were established.”

The formation of Duta BK as a “mediator” is a strategic step that aligns with the urgency of structured peer counseling to facilitate the socio-emotional regulation of post-pandemic adolescents.¹⁶ Empirically, peer counseling programs have proven to be effective instruments in strengthening adolescent resilience and mental health because they learn to understand and help each other within a daily context.¹⁷

At SMA Future Gate Putri, this program is realized through four systematic stages. First, a competency-based recruitment process (through essay selection and interviews) which selects 7-8 students from 37 applicants. Second, training in basic BK skills, such as principles of confidentiality, active listening techniques, and how to handle crises. Third is the implementation stage. Interestingly, although the school has an ideal ratio (3 BK teachers for 188 students), the role of Duta BK remains crucial due to the dual nature of students' lives: school and boarding. Mrs. Najma stated:

“They are our right hand in carrying out duties when we are not in the children's position... For implementation, it is adjusted to the comfort of the children and whom they want to talk to. But most of them choose classmates. The time itself is flexible, but mostly during boarding hours... from 5 PM to 10 PM.”

The utilization of Duta BK, operating flexibly during boarding hours, is an effective solution to the accessibility barriers of guidance and counseling in Islamic boarding educational institutions (*pesantren*/boarding). Recent studies have found that *santri* or boarding students often hesitate to visit formal BK services due to cultural barriers, shame, social stigma, or the fear of being considered as having a “lack of faith” if they have psychological problems.¹⁸ Peer interaction in the boarding house at night succeeds in breaking down these barriers because of the equal psychological standing among adolescents. Furthermore, the delegation of initial affective tasks to Duta BK functions as a protection buffer to maintain the emotional well-being of the BK Teachers themselves, who are prone to exhaustion due to the high intensity and complexity of adolescent issues in a boarding environment.¹⁹

The fourth stage is the supervision and evaluation process. Peer counselors are required to submit weekly reports. BK teachers also perform a proactive cross-check with the boarding supervisors (*musyrifah*) to avoid information bias. Ultimately, these progress reports are communicated to parents through the “Buku Laporan Adab” (Adab Report Book).

¹⁶ Fitria Nurmastuti et al., “Development of a Structure Peer Counseling Model to Improve Assertive Behavior Among Junior High School Student,” *Suluh: Jurnal Bimbingan Dan Konseling* 11, no. 2 (2026): 75–78, <https://doi.org/10.33084/suluh.v1i2.12405>.

¹⁷ Ghina Nisrina et al., “Effectiveness of Peer Counseling as a Strengthening Effort Mental Health of Adolescents,” *Journal of Psychology Today* 1, no. 2 (2023): 76–79.

¹⁸ Abbas and Sapari, “Dinamika Psikologis Santri Dalam Mengakses Layanan Bimbingan Dan Konseling Di Pesantren.”

¹⁹ Hanifah and Utomo, “Dukungan Sosial Sebagai Faktor Penunjang Kesejahteraan Emosional Guru Bimbingan Konseling SMP Negeri Di Kecamatan Gemolong.”

This strict oversight mechanism confirms that the program at SMA Future Gate upholds the principle of supervised peer counseling, where peer counselors do not act beyond their professional capacity. The involvement of *musyrifah* and periodic reporting through the *Buku Laporan Adab* also represents a holistic synergy in Islamic education. Family involvement holds a fundamental protective and socialization function in ensuring the continuity of character and moral (*akhlak*) education for the child, from the school and boarding realms back to the home.²⁰

Cognitive Stimulation through the Plus-Minus-Implication (PMI) Approach

In practice, peer counseling at SMA Future Gate Putri does not merely focus on emotional catharsis but is systematically designed to train students' critical reasoning. Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers equip the BK Ambassadors with a specific thinking framework so they are capable of guiding their peers away from narrow-mindedness. Mrs. Najma explained:

“We instill in the children that when they decide on something, it shouldn't be based on just one side. Instead, they should think from several aspects... We are applying the PMI way of thinking. PMI stands for Plus, Minus, Implication. When they receive information, we invite them to think about what the plus is, what the minus is, and what will happen because of it. Ultimately, they find the way out themselves.”

This approach is directly applied by peer counselors in the field. Mawar, one of the peer counselors, shared the dynamics of facing a counselee who was stubborn about their own opinion:

“The counselee didn't want to take our advice. Most of them are stubborn. They choose not to move on from their problems... To handle this, I usually invite them to think about the risks they will face when making that decision. The second choice is that I return it to the person by giving our view on the decision. The result is that most of them follow my advice.”

The application of the Plus-Minus-Implication (PMI) method in counseling sessions is a highly interesting finding and proves the occurrence of structured cognitive skill transfer. Theoretically, PMI is an attention-directed strategy proven effective in increasing the creative and analytical thinking skills of learners.²¹ This approach forces individuals to move beyond impulsive judgments by exploring the positive points (plus), negative points (minus), and interesting consequences or implications of an action before making a final decision.²²

Mawar's action in inviting her counselee to consider the "risks" of a decision is a direct manifestation of the PMI method. This practice represents a core indicator of

²⁰ Cepi Ramdani et al., “Peran Keluarga Dalam Pendidikan Karakter,” *Banun: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini* 1, no. 2 (2023): 12–20.

²¹ Prof Hemant Lata Sharma et al., “PMI (Plus-Minus-Interesting): An Attention- Directed Strategy For Enhancing Creative Thinking Among Elementary School Students,” *IJFMR - International Journal For Multidisciplinary Research* 5, no. 4 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2023.v05i04.5211>.

²² Isah Cahyani et al., “Enhancing Writing Skills and Language Creativity through the Plus-Minus-Interesting Technique: A Case Study at the Primary School Level,” *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 13, no. 1 (2023): 63–71, <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v13i1.58257>.

higher-order thinking skills. As emphasized in literature regarding critical thinking assessment, a critical thinker is an individual capable of suspending impulsive judgment, evaluating arguments from various perspectives, and considering the logical consequences of an action.²³

Furthermore, the dynamics between Mawar and her counselee demonstrate an increase in cognitive engagement. Literature affirms that peer support is one of the most powerful mediators in maintaining students' cognitive engagement and rational motivation within the school environment.²⁴ Through dialogues facilitated by the PMI method, the peer counselor does not impose a solution but acts as a scaffolding that guides the counselee to find their own rational answer. This proves that peer counseling programs are significantly capable of becoming a medium for the operationalization of critical thinking, which is urgently needed by adolescents to combat reactive attitudes and information bias in the digital era.²⁵

Dynamics of Equality, Emotional Regulation, and the Concept of *Tabayyun*

The effectiveness of cognitive stimulation in peer counseling relies heavily on the quality of the interpersonal relationship built between the counselor and the counselee. At SMA Future Gate Putri Boarding Bekasi, an equal psychological position (equality) is the primary key to students' openness. The counselee feels unjudged and unintimidated, unlike when facing authority figures (teachers or parents). Melati, as a counselee, validated this comfort: *“Because the peer counselor's vision is that they won't spread the story to others. The person is also trustworthy... She is also easy to talk to because we are the same age, so the language is more comfortable.”* From this sense of security, the peer counselor can perform cognitive interventions beginning with neutralizing the counselee's emotions. Mawar explained the steps she takes when receiving a story from a friend:

“When a friend shares a story, I align the perception first. I ask back if this is what they meant, and also perform perception checking—whether the feeling I perceive is the same as what they feel. Then, I neutralize their feelings so that after leaving the counseling session, they are no longer emotional... I try to give small gestures to boost their mood and show care.”

The perception checking and empathy shown by Mawar emphasize that student-centered mentoring is capable of facilitating significant emotional regulation. Psychologically, adolescents are highly vulnerable to peer influence. Referring to Social Cognitive Theory, supportive and empathetic peers can become positive role models who indirectly increase self-confidence and academic motivation, as well as adolescent problem-solving skills.²⁶ The role of peer counselors as mediators in school social conflict dynamics underscores the importance of a humanistic approach to fostering social

²³ Jan Sobocan et al., *Critical Thinking Education and Assessment, 2nd Ed.: Can Higher Order Thinking Be Tested?*, in *Windsor Studies in Argumentation* (Windsor Studies in Argumentation, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.22329/wsia.12.2022>.

²⁴ Bryce et al., “Hope Longitudinally Predicts Achievement.”

²⁵ Younis, “From Digital Literacy to Action.”

²⁶ Yunting Lu, “The Role of Peer Influence in Adolescent Academic Motivation: A Review of Mechanisms, Contexts, and Future Directions,” *Journal of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences* 59 (October 2025): 34–41, <https://doi.org/10.54097/p5ca6f02>.

awareness, empathy, and critical thinking.²⁷

Furthermore, success in neutralizing emotions is an absolute prerequisite before students can think rationally. In Islamic education discourse, this is highly relevant to Imam Al-Ghazali's thought, which emphasizes the importance of balance between the intellectual dimension (Aql) and the spiritual dimension (Qalb).²⁸ Clear and critical thinking cannot be achieved solely through rational logic; rather, it requires tranquility of the soul and purity of the heart to produce individuals who are both intelligent and moral.²⁹

Beyond managing emotions, peer counselors in the boarding environment are trained not to swallow information raw. Given the frequency of social friction in the dorms, Mawar applies a principle of caution before responding to a counselee's complaint:

"I confirm first. I look at their daily life to see if it's true or not. If it's too sensitive to ask directly, I'll ask their friends. If it seems safe, I'll ask the person... We, among peer counselors, will only share problems that truly need to be solved together... So we still maintain the principle of confidentiality."

Mawar's action in cross-checking facts before drawing a conclusion is the essence of critical thinking: the ability to detect bias and evaluate the truth of an argument.³⁰ In the Islamic educational tradition, this multi-layered verification practice is a tangible manifestation of the concept of *Tabayyun*.³¹ Islamic education has since the beginning emphasized the use of reason and reasoning to filter information and dampen conflict. Habitualizing the attitude of *Tabayyun* through peer counseling forums—as also proven in mosque youth communities in the era of disruption—is a highly effective preventive strategy for building self-control and ethical literacy behavior, both in physical interactions in the dorms and when interacting on social media.³²

Cognitive Independence, Boundaries, and Decision Making

The ultimate goal of every guidance and counseling process is not to create dependency, but rather to build student independence in solving their own problems. At SMA Future Gate Putri Boarding Bekasi, the peer counseling process clearly facilitates the students' transition from a reactive and dependent attitude toward a proactive and

²⁷ Minding and Bone, "The Strategic Role of School Counselors in Guiding Students to Face Peer Pressure at SMA Negeri 4 Kupang."

²⁸ Nazila Mumtaza Zamhariroh et al., "Relevansi Pemikiran Pendidikan Al-Ghazali Dengan Pendidikan Islam Kontemporer Tentang Keseimbangan Intelektual Dan Spiritual," *Kariman: Jurnal Pendidikan Keislaman* 12, no. 2 (2024): 169–81, <https://doi.org/10.52185/kariman.v12i2.569>.

²⁹ Bima Fandi Asy'arie et al., "Analisis Pendidikan Agama Islam Dan Pendidikan Akhlak Perspektif Al-Ghazali," *Al-Qalam: Jurnal Kajian Islam Dan Pendidikan* 15, no. 2 (2023): 155–66, <https://doi.org/10.47435/al-qalam.v15i2.2279>.

³⁰ Habibie Ramadhan and Junaidi Arsyad, "Critical Thinking in Islamic Educational Tradition and Its Relevance to 21st Century Skills," *Journal of Educational Sciences* 9, no. 4 (2025): 3118–31, <https://doi.org/10.31258/jes.9.4.p.3118-3131>.

³¹ Lora Hilal Fikri, "Islamic Education and Social Media Literacy in Facing the Information Era for Indonesia's Young Generation," *Journal of Education and Religious Studies* 3, no. 03 (2023): 100–107, <https://doi.org/10.57060/jers.v3i03.123>.

³² Sibyan et al., "Konseling Sebaya dalam Penggunaan Media Sosial di Era Disrupsi Self Control Pada Remaja Masjid"; Fikri, "Islamic Education and Social Media Literacy in Facing the Information Era for Indonesia's Young Generation."

cognitively independent stance. This was felt directly by Melati as a counselee: *“I used to tell all my problems to the peer counselor. Now, if there’s a problem, I look for the solution first, and then I ask the peer counselor if this approach is correct.”* In addition to independence in seeking solutions, Melati also showed rapid development in assertive abilities and setting boundaries:

“In 10th grade, I thought too much about other people. I forgot about myself. Now, I focus on myself. I’ve become more selective; for example, in terms of refusing others. I dare to say no if I truly cannot do something.”

The change in Melati’s proactive attitude—formulating independent solutions before confirming them with a counselor—indicates the formation of self-confidence in reasoning. Furthermore, Melati’s courage to “say no” and stop being a people-pleaser is a strong indicator of increased assertive behavior. Recent literature affirms that structured peer counseling interventions are significantly proven to increase adolescent assertive behavior, enabling them to express opinions, resist negative peer pressure, and maintain interpersonal boundaries.³³

The ability to set these boundaries is also closely correlated with a decrease in Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) symptoms prevalent in the digital era. Building self-confidence and self-regulation skills through awareness literacy serves as a strategic solution to fortify Generation Z against social pressure and harmful conformity impulses.³⁴

On the other hand, the benefits of peer counseling are also felt reciprocally by the counselors themselves. Mawar expressed that her role as a BK Ambassador matured her mindset and emotional stability:

“I feel there is a minimum of friendship conflict now because I understand how to comprehend and accept others. I also feel more relieved because I don’t demand anything from others. Furthermore, I’ve become able to understand problems from various perspectives and can tolerate a condition with logical reasons... Now, I think that if I don’t tell [someone], turns out the solution is still there. If I still can’t find it, I can always talk to a friend or the BK Teacher.”

Mawar’s narrative proves that peer counseling is a process of reciprocal learning. For the counselor, exposure to various case studies from peers trains cognitive flexibility. Her ability to tolerate conditions with “logical reasons” and understand problems from “various perspectives” is the highest manifestation of critical thinking ability.

The cognitive and social transformation experienced by Melati and Mawar represents the successful integration of 21st-century skills or the 4C skills (Critical thinking, Creativity, Communication, and Collaboration). In the Islamic educational tradition, integrating religious values with 4C skills holds great potential to improve the quality of holistic education, while preparing students to face global challenges

³³ Nurmastuti et al., “Development of a Structure Peer Counseling Model to Improve Assertive Behavior Among Junior High School Student.”

³⁴ Tetteng et al., “The Moderating Role of Social Media Usage in the Relationship between Self-Confidence and Fear of Missing out among High School Students”; Chishomuddin et al., “Digital Literacy as a Strategic Solution to Overcome Fear of Missing Out Behavior.”

intelligently, adaptively, and with strong character.³⁵ This confirms that peer counseling is not just a reactive solution for adolescent mental health issues, but a proactive strategy to strengthen their thinking architecture and overall life skills.³⁶

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of peer counseling (Duta BK) at SMA Future Gate Putri Boarding Bekasi is effective not only as a means of emotional support but also as a strategic instrument for developing students' critical thinking skills. Through a structured approach, including the use of cognitive methods such as Plus-Minus-Implication (PMI) and the habituation of information clarification (Tabayyun), peer counselors successfully facilitate their peers in suspending impulsive judgments, mapping risks, and making logical decisions. The equality of age and psychological position in peer counseling manages to break down students' reluctance to access formal BK services while creating the essential safe space to regulate adolescent emotions in a boarding environment.

The peer counseling process provides a significant cognitive transformation impact for both the counselee and the counselor. Counsees who were initially reactive and emotionally dependent are now able to demonstrate independent thinking, resilience against social pressure, and the ability to set assertive boundaries to avoid Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) syndrome. Meanwhile, peer counselors experience a maturation of cognitive flexibility and social empathy. This proves that integrating 21st-century skills (critical, communicative, collaborative) with Islamic educational values through peer counseling is capable of producing an adolescent generation that is intellectually bright and spiritually mature.

Despite providing comprehensive findings, this study has several limitations. The qualitative approach with a case study design at a single all-girls boarding school makes these findings specific and not widely generalizable to regular schools or co-educational systems. Furthermore, the evaluation of critical thinking success in this study was based on self-reported data from interviews, rather than standardized cognitive measurement instruments. Therefore, future research is suggested to use quantitative or mixed-methods with a larger sample, as well as directly measure the effectiveness of peer counseling on reducing FoMO levels and improving adolescent digital literacy using validated psychometric scales.

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