

## **APPLICATION OF PEER METHOD TUTORING IN CULTIVATING SENSE OF BELONGING JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO ONLINE LEARNING**

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### **ABSTRACT**

A sense of belonging is a very important feeling for students to build relationships in the classroom community through face-to-face and online learning. The fact that the teacher found during the teaching practice of grade VII junior high school students in online learning, the teacher found a lack of belonging to their class community. Following up on these problems, the teacher facilitates students by applying the peer tutoring method that allows students to get support from teachers and peers so that it has the potential to foster a sense of belonging to students. The purpose of writing is to describe the application of the peer tutor method as an effort to foster a sense of belonging to students, especially in class VII junior high school students. The method used is descriptive qualitative. This research was conducted in SKK Erenas where a total of 52 students became respondents. Writing concludes that the application of the peer tutoring method is carried out by combining synchronous and asynchronous learning to help students foster a sense of belonging in online learning even though they have not achieved maximum results. Teachers need a correct and reflective heart response to face various challenges in the world of education. Teachers cannot change students' personalities but can become facilitators to create class communities that love one another. The advice to the teacher is to continue the implementation of the peer tutoring method consistently for a long time to foster a sense of belonging to students in online learning.

**Keywords:** Sense of Belonging, Peer Tutoring Method, Online Learning

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### **PRELIMINARY**

Humans need other people to form a group or community that has the potential to grow a sense of belonging in each member. It is in line with the opinion Putri & Suryanto (2018) that a sense of belonging is something that every individual must have to bring up a feeling of being valued in the group and encourage the desire to participate in carrying out tasks in the organization or group. A sense of belonging is a feeling in a person that arises as a result of psychosocial constructions that describe a sense of fit or a feeling of acceptance toward his community (Bouchard & Berg, 2017). A sense of belonging can grow along with the social relationships that individuals build with other individuals or their groups.

A sense of belonging is needed by school residents, especially students, to interact with the social environment at school. Walton and Cohen in Peter et al (2015) stated that

someone who feels ownership of their academic environment will feel happier, establish more relationships with others, and improve self-welfare while undergoing their education. It means that the existence of a sense of belonging in students can support a sense of social interaction with others in their class community at school. However, the Indonesian government's policy to implement online learning as a form of breaking the chain of COVID-19 has resulted in reduced interaction between teachers and students. It has the potential to affect students' sense of belonging to their class community. Based on the reflection of teaching teachers of grade VII junior high school students in one of the schools in Jakarta, students do not have a sense of belonging to their class community. The teacher found several problems experienced by students during online learning, such as tending to be passive during the learning process, not collecting assignments given by the teacher until the third meeting, and not daring to express their opinions about the obstacles experienced during online learning. In this case, the teacher must be aware of his role in helping students foster a sense of belonging to their classroom community.

Grade VII junior high school students who are early adolescents who are experiencing a process of growth in knowing their identity need interaction with others. Fatimah (2016) stated that the process of forming adolescent self-identity is the result of adolescents' experience in their social environment to gain meaningful experiences so that they can develop communication skills. Therefore, teachers need to create a classroom community that encourages students to support each other. In this case, teachers facilitate students through the application of peer tutor methods to help students overcome difficulties in online learning while increasing relationships between students to allow students' sense of belonging to grow towards their class community. In line with Togari's opinion, Setyowati & Fauziah (2019) said that the factors that influence students' sense of belonging to school are the relationship between students and teachers, peers, and their environment.

Facing Industry 4.0 in the world of education is the responsibility of the teacher to prepare students well (Tunde & Listiani, 2021). The peer tutor method is one of the learning methods that provide opportunities for students to get support from teachers and peers. Munthe & Naibaho (2019) stated that the peer tutor method is a learning process that facilitates students to learn, discuss, share knowledge, and create a sense of comfort with peers so that students can express their opinions and ask questions about difficulties experienced during learning. Tetiwar & Appulembang (2018) added that students will more easily understand simple language from peers through their interactions with friends in groups. However, teachers still guide students during the application of peer tutor methods

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to help students who need teachers to deal with difficulties in the group. In the learning process, a positive and reflective heart response is very important for teachers to be able to deal with different student characters.

Based on the explanation above, the formulation of the problem in this study was how the peer tutor method can foster a sense of belonging to students in online learning. Referring to the problem formulation, the purpose of this study was to describe the application of the peer tutor method as an effort to foster a sense of belonging to students, especially grade VII junior high school in online learning.

## METHODS

This research used a qualitative descriptive method, with data analysis techniques using descriptive analysis (AL-Ashri & Awalludin, 2023). This method was chosen to describe the sense of belonging of students. The subjects of this study were 52 students of grade VII junior high school which were divided into two classes. The school studied was a private high school in SKK Erenos Tangerang Indonesia. Research data were collected through observation, personal reflection from teachers, and simple interviews.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

The research on having grade VII junior high school students was carried out after the teacher conducted teaching practices at 3 initial meetings and saw that students were still experiencing obstacles to adapting to learning and learning. Based on teaching reflections, teachers write down the results of research and have students into the following table:

**Table 1. Student Sense of Belonging Research Results Based on Observation**

Meeting	Learning methods	Student response	Indicators of a sense of belonging
I	Talks and demonstrations	Some students are actively involved and other students tend to be passive.	- Students have interpersonal relationships with teachers and peers thus increasing self-confidence and a sense of security
II	Talk	There are still students who are passive and there are some students who do not submit assignments. Students felt enthusiastic and began to participate. However, there are still students who do not submit the second assignment as well as the previous assignment. The teacher kept reminding the students.	- Students participate in class activities
III	Talks and ask questions and use <i>Kahoot. it</i> learning media		
IV	Talks and ask questions and peer tutors	After the teacher takes a personal approach, it turns out that students experience network problems, forget there are math assignments because there are too many tasks from other	

Meeting	Learning methods	Student response	Indicators of a sense of belonging
V	Peer tutors	<p>lessons, and do not understand the material completely. Therefore, the teacher decided to apply the peer tutor method to online learning with the aim that fellow students can help their friends follow the learning and improve relationships with peers who can grow the hope of having students. When conducting evaluations, some students admitted to doing group exercises individually, did not have mobile <i>phones</i> to communicate with group friends, were not comfortable with group friends and there were still some students who were dominant in the class, and there were tutors who did not carry out their responsibilities properly. However, other tutors have already carried out their responsibilities with group mates.</p>	<p>to feel social connections</p> <p>- Students help others or peers</p>

Student responses to some initial meetings using the lecture method were still ineffective and indicated a lack of belonging to their classroom community in online learning. Zaharah & Susilowati (2020) stated in their research in one of the junior high schools that students who tend to be passive, reduce interaction between teachers and students, and only accept what the teacher gives is result of a lack of motivation, unreadiness of students to follow learning and lack of enthusiasm. In line with the Setyowati & Fauziah (2019) opinion that the lack or absence of students can affect academic achievement, enthusiasm for doing assignments, emotional stability, and suppress other juvenile delinquency. Teachers' efforts to use learning media to encourage student engagement do not make students participate fully. After the teacher takes a personal approach and knows the reasons for some students' deviant behavior in learning and learning, finally the teacher decides to apply the peer tutor learning method.

Teachers facilitate students by applying peer tutoring methods in the hope that students get support from teachers and peers which allows students to grow their sense of belonging to the classroom community. Slaten et al (2019) stated in their research that significant teacher-peer relationships influence students' sense of belonging to the school. Therefore, teachers need to be able to facilitate student needs through classrooms that can provide comfort in learning. Keyes (2019) stated that teachers can create classrooms that provide a sense of belonging and engagement for high school students when students feel supported during learning, encouraged to take risks, have the desire to interact and learn from others, and feel led to create new ideas and understanding. That is, students can feel

their presence in the classroom community is strongly supported by those around them. However, each learning method has its disadvantages and advantages in its implementation. Likewise, the application of the peer tutor method that the teacher applies still does not provide maximum results to grow the hope of having students.

Based on the results of the evaluation of the application of the peer tutor method, the teacher found that some students still did not have the hope of having a group of people. One indicator of a student's sense of belonging has not been fulfilled is that students do not have interpersonal relationships with peers so students do not carry out teacher instructions as a whole in applying the peer tutor method. Peacock & Cowan (2019) in their research stated that a sense of belonging is a personal problem so it is difficult to see its origin and impact on one's learning experience and learning. On the other hand, indicators of students' sense of belonging to participate in class activities and help peers have been met with some students volunteering to explain group assignments and several tutors performing their duties well. In the context of learning in the future, teachers and students have limited interaction and limited time in applying the peer tutor method so the hope of having students is still not fully visible. In line with Thomas et al (2014) interview with one of the academics cultivating a sense of belonging online is a challenging task with efforts to form an online learning community, feel involved and be part of something. However, the sense of belonging of students may grow more and more when students continue to receive support from teachers and peers through the consistent application of peer tutor methods for a long time. Therefore, it can be concluded that the application of the peer tutor method has the potential to grow the hope of having students who need consistency in their application and a long enough time.

The application of the peer tutor method to grade VII junior high school students was carried out based on teacher observations at several initial meetings on the lack of students belonging to learning in school. It can be seen from some of the problems experienced by students who tend to be passive during the learning process, do not collect assignments given by the teacher until the third meeting, and do not dare to express their opinions about the obstacles experienced during online learning. Based on Rosanti (2018), students who have incomplete grades and tend to be passive when learning, the problem she experiences is when the student learning process tends to be Afraid and embarrassed in expressing opinions to teachers, it is difficult to express the problems experienced will be more courageous to express their opinions to some friends who are considered willing to share knowledge. The peer tutor method allows students to get support from teachers and peers. The application of

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the peer tutor method in online learning has limitations so that it is carried out gradually over several meetings which are presented by the lesson plan and teaching reflections in Table 2:

**Table 1. Application of the Peer Tutor Method to Online Learning**

Meeting	Information
I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The teacher assigns some students to tutors based on the average score of the independent assignment at several previous meetings</li> <li>- Divide students into 6 groups with 1 tutor in each group</li> <li>- Explain the purpose of applying the peer tutor method to students</li> <li>- Form a group with tutors via <i>WhatsApp</i> (WA) and a mentor join in it to monitor the progress of each group and ask each tutor to form their group</li> </ul>
II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At a face-to-face meeting), the teacher gives and explains the practice questions that students will do together with their group mates</li> <li>- Students do group practice questions that will be led by tutors in <i>asynchronous</i>.</li> </ul>
III	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- conduct face-to-face meetings to discuss the material that has been learned together with group friends</li> <li>- Evaluate learning activities, especially the application of peer tutor methods.</li> </ul>

In the application of the peer tutor method, teachers ask students to do group questions asynchronously so that they can use learning time effectively during online learning. In line with the research, De Smet et al (2010) the application of online peer tutors has several advantages such as independence of time and location, increasing time to reflect, think, and seek additional information before conveying it during joint discussions. In learning and learning, students must use several platforms that support and are adequate to interact with other students. This is in line with Zulkifli et al (2018) research that utilizing learning platforms to teach and learn with peers has a significant positive impact on student learning outcomes. Students and teachers can take advantage of technological advances to conduct learning.

In the next meeting, the teacher conducts learning in synchronous to discuss the results of group discussions as well as evaluate the application of the peer tutor method. Some students volunteer themselves as group representatives to discuss the results of assignments that have been done together in groups. In addition, some tutors have also done their responsibilities well although some of their friends have not responded well. The teacher appreciates the tutor's efforts to carry out his role in guiding friends in his group. However, it is undeniable that each individual has a different character and is difficult to understand directly. One of the problems that occur in the application of peer tutors, some tutors do not carry out their responsibilities in the group. This can be seen when the teacher monitors the group, one of the tutors states that he does not know the condition of friends in his group, and during the evaluation of learning some students state that they do group exercises individually and do not dare to convey the reason. Based on several studies Evans

& Moore (2013) stated that tutors who seem unprepared and spread misinformation cause negative responses and reduce student performance. It is the lack of support from tutors that results in students eventually deciding to do group exercises on their own.

Following up on the problems that occur, teachers need to understand that students, especially grade VII junior high school who are among the early adolescents, still have difficulty controlling themselves. In line with Thalib (2010) that adolescents who cannot adjust themselves to the environment can result in frustration that gives rise to passivity, apathy or indifference to their environment, withdrawal from the social environment, aggressive verbal and physical forms, and escape from reality. However, teachers must still monitor student behavior and still provide opportunities for students to interact with their peers at school. Wulandari (2014) stated that early adolescents aged 11-14 years including junior high school students begin to seek affiliation with peers to deal with changes in themselves and struggle to get a place in the group so that peer acceptance is very important in their lives. Therefore, the support of teachers and peers in the application of the peer tutor method allows students to grow toward their class community in learning.

## **Discussion**

The human need to interact with other humans constitutes human identity as a social being. Welianto (2020) said that humans as social creatures have characteristics such as not being able to live alone, having social needs to interact with others, and being able to develop their potential when living among humans. This need is what makes humans need groups or communities to interact and socialize with others. Likewise, in the world of education, schools facilitate students with various communities that students can have according to their comfort in relating. However, the community that students always visit and can be said to be like their own family is a classroom community.

In a classroom community, both students and teachers need to care for each other. Efforts to achieve a class community that cares for each other and has a positive impact on themselves cannot be separated from the sense of belonging that each member must have in relationships. The teacher concludes that a sense of belonging is a feeling of students feeling accepted, supported, and feeling compatible with others according to their experiences to influence psychological development to prioritize common interests. Yuwono (2020) said that a strong sense of belonging from each individual in the organization can trigger the desire to better participate and implement organizational values in oneself. Therefore, the existence of a sense of belonging in students can allow students to reduce or even avoid behavioral deviations at school.

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The form of learning in schools can change to the needs and agreements of the authorities in the world of education. One of the Indonesian government's policies to conduct learning from home during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in learning that was originally face-to-face learning had to change to online learning. Adit (2020) argues that the purpose of online learning is to fulfill students' rights to get educational services, prevent the spread and transmission of COVID-19 to education unit residents, and fulfill psychosocial support for children, teachers, and parents during the *COVID-19* period. In this case, the role of the teacher is very important to support the psychosocial of students by ensuring that student's sense of belonging remains to their class community in learning and learning. Thomas et al (2014) argued that students and teachers strive to achieve a feeling of belonging in online learning communities to varying degrees of success, thus requiring teachers to provide a learning environment that encourages students to engage and participate in their classroom community.

The fact that teachers found during the practice of teaching in one of the schools in Jakarta to grade VII junior high school students, students still do not have a sense of belonging to their class community. The teacher found several problems experienced by students such as tending to be passive during the learning process, not collecting assignments given by the teacher until the third meeting, and not daring to express their opinions about the obstacles experienced during learning. Given these problems, teachers have a role in answering student problems in learning and learning. Rahman (2014) stated that the role of teachers is not only teaching but being learners who must pay attention to important aspects of learning that will shape their character and always think about what changes will be indicators of success in learning so that teachers must think students can do the same. That is, teachers need to determine the right steps according to student needs.

Students are unique individuals with a diversity of characteristics that teachers must know to be able to see student needs. For a child, a sense of belonging is first addressed to family, neighbors, cultural groups, and other communities (Yuwono, 2020). This is what teachers must use to create a learning atmosphere that can foster students' sense of belonging to their class community. Based on the results Keyes (2019), students revealed that 2 teacher actions encourage students to be involved and build classrooms, namely fostering good relationships between students and teachers and implementing teaching practices that encourage students to participate. Following up on facts that occur in the field, teachers facilitate students through the application of peer tutor methods. This is in line with Wibowo (2016) that some things that greatly affect students during the learning process in class are

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teachers, student activity, facilities and infrastructure, media and learning methods, and student activities individually and in groups. Even after taking into account the belongingness ratings from primary school, student personal characteristics like social competence, physical appearance competence, and coping abilities were found to be strongly associated with belongingness in secondary school (Vaz et al., 2015).

Based on the teacher's conclusion the peer tutor method is a group-based learning method that focuses on the role of students as tutors who have a high academic ability to guide and assist peers in achieving cooperative learning goals. Peer guidance is an effective way for students to learn from each other and can develop students' communication and interpersonal skills (Ali & Anwer, 2015). The presence of tutors in peer tutor groups is helpful to peers in groups. Rosanti (2018) stated that peer tutor learning can reduce the gap between students who have high academic ability and students who have low academic ability. Students who feel that they have low academic ability will feel that they are accepted and supported by the presence of tutors who help their friends understand the subject matter. Peacock & Cowan (2019) stated that the role of tutors as facilitators is very helpful for students to increase understanding and have students significantly in helping student development.

Tutors who are entrusted with leading their peers in groups will feel valued and allowed to engage in classroom activities that can affect their sense of belonging to their class community. In line with the statement that hope can be developed when someone throughout the educational process can share experiences, feelings, hopes, commitments, and achievements that exist in him. However, the application of a learning method must experience obstacles and does not always provide maximum results. Based on the results of the evaluation of the application of the peer tutor method that the teacher applied to grade VII junior high school students, there were several obstacles such as some students claiming to do group assignments individually but did not dare to convey the reason directly, did not have a *mobile phone* to communicate with group friends, was not comfortable with group friends and there were still dominant students in the class, And there are some tutors who do not carry out their responsibilities properly. However, the other tutors have already performed their duties according to the teacher's instructions.

The obstacles that occur in the application of the peer tutor method are influenced by different social personalities and become one of the challenges in fostering a sense of belonging in the peer group. Dominika & Virlia (2018) stated that social personality consists of *extroverts* and *introverts* who each have different traits, ways of thinking, behavior, and

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interaction with others. The differences in social personality that students have affect students' sense of belonging to their class community. This is in line with the opinion Rivas et al (2019) that a sense of belonging is more visible for those who have a more social personality (*extroverted*) than those who do not have a social personality. In this case, it can be seen that *introverted* students tend to withdraw from social life so that they have less or no sense of belonging to their class community. On the one hand, tutors who do not carry out their responsibilities properly indicate that tutor training is needed to increase their confidence in guiding students. In line with De Smet et al (2008) research, tutor training is needed which aims to enable tutors to vary their tutoring behavior and increase the knowledge and reflective behavior of tutors. However, distance and time limitations on learning do not allow teachers to conduct tutor training as they should. The teacher chooses a tutor based on observations of the tutor's attitude during learning and the higher academic ability of his peers. Based on these problems, teachers need to have an understanding that there is no perfect human being who can give satisfaction to the efforts made. The identity of teachers and students as sinful human beings cannot be eliminated as long as humans are still on earth. For this research to be better, there needs to be validation from learning design experts on the teaching materials (Listiani, 2022).

Grade VII junior high school students who are classified as teenagers still do not have emotional stability so it tends to be difficult to control themselves over their social environment. This is in line with Brummelen (2008) the opinion that adolescence is a very fragile period in controlling emotions because they often experience rejection and feelings of depression. In this case, education is here to help students experience renewal. The purpose of education is to bring young people the development of character, mindset, social responsibility, mental, physical, and social health and development for the world of work so that service to God and others can be achieved forever (Knight, 2009). The achievement of character development, mindset, and social life of students cannot be separated from the role of teachers as educators. The role of the teacher is very important to be able to facilitate the needs of students in learning.

Brummelen (2008) stated that teachers as facilitators must be able to emulate the Creator who not only facilitates His students but shows and calls people to follow a good way of life. Teachers can implement a good way of life by creating a classroom community that supports each other so that it can reflect a growing community. Estep Jr et al (2008) state that educators train and lead people to live in the Spirit to a complete spiritual life to

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become mature persons. This means that both students and teachers can reflect their behavior as adults with an attitude of mutual love and support for each other.

The teacher must also keep in mind his identity as a created being completely dependent on God. A correct and reflective heart response is indispensable for Christian teachers as agents of God's reconciliation in facing various challenges in schools. Teachers need patience and obedience to achieve their goals in transforming the world of education. Calvin (2000) states that man's obedience to God's call through the slightest work that is even considered despised will gain valuable value in God's eyes. Therefore, a teacher must still have a heart response that is always renewed through the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that whatever becomes a challenge in the world of education can be faced while remaining centered on his Creator. The limitation of this study is that the time used for research is very short. So, the observation of each student is still lacking. The Peer Tutoring method will help students' sense of belonging if given a longer time to apply.

## CONCLUSION

The application of the peer tutor method is carried out by teachers by combining *synchronous* and *asynchronous* learning to help students foster a sense of belonging to online learning. However, the application of this method has not achieved maximum results with limited interaction and time in online learning and the different social personalities of grade VII junior high school students. Therefore, teachers play a role in knowing the characteristics of each student and have the right and reflective heart response to face various challenges in the world of education. The teacher needs to realize that he cannot change the student directly but the Holy Spirit whose role is to change the heart of every human being who will influence his actions.

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